

SEPTEMBER

# COMMENTARY

America the Beautiful

Improvisations on Themes from My Life

The Liberal's Vote and '48

The Myth of the Supra-Human Jew

First Love—A Story

A Parent Looks at Jewish Education

Denmark: Oasis of Decency

To Edom—A Poem

The Strange Case of Sarah E.

From the American Scene—

The Card Player: His Rise and Fall

Cedars of Lebanon—

From the Land of Sheba

The Study of Man—

Is the Depression Inevitable?

MARY McCARTHY

ARTUR SCHNABEL

JAMES A. WECHSLER

IRVING KRISTOL

ISAAK BABEL

L. H. GRUNEBAUM

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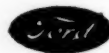
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# HAPPY NEW YEAR

*Our very sincere wishes  
that the New Year may  
bring the fullest measure  
of peace and true brother  
hood among all men of  
all nations.*

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# COMMENTARY

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*Martin Greenberg*

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### **Isaac Rahabi Makes Good**

*Harry E. Wedeck*

In far-off India, a Jewish lad faces a personal problem, and finds a somewhat unexpected solution.



# COMMENTARY

## AMERICA THE BEAUTIFUL

### *The Humanist in the Bathtub*

MARY McCARTHY

A VISITING Existentialist wanted recently to be taken to dinner at a really American place. This proposal, natural enough in a tourist, disclosed a situation thoroughly unnatural. Unless the visiting lady's object was suffering, there was no way of satisfying her demand. Sukiyaki joints, chop suey joints, Italian table d'hôte places, French provincial restaurants with the menu written on a slate, Irish chophouses, and Jewish delicatessens came abundantly to mind, but these were not what the lady wanted. Schrafft's or the Automat would have answered, yet to take her there would have been to turn oneself into a tourist and to present America as a spectacle, a *New Yorker* cartoon or a savage drawing in the *New Masses*. It was the beginning of an evening of humiliations. The visitor was lively and eager; her mind lay open and orderly, like a notebook ready for impressions. It was not long, however, before she

shut it up with a snap. We had no recommendations to make to her. With movies, plays, current books, it was the same story as with the restaurants—*Open City*, *Les Enfants du Paradis*, Oscar Wilde, a reprint of Henry James were *paté de maison* to this lady who wanted the definitive flapjack. She did not believe us when we said that there were no good Hollywood movies, no good Broadway plays—only curios; she was merely confirmed in her impression that American intellectuals were "negative."

Yet the irritating thing was that we did not feel negative. We admired and liked our country; we preferred it to that imaginary America, land of the *peaux rouges* of Caldwell and Steinbeck, dumb paradise of violence and the detective story, which had excited the sensibilities of our visitor and of the up-to-date French literary world. But to found our preference, to locate it materially in some admirable object or institution, such as Chartres, say, or French café life, was for us, that night at any rate, an impossible undertaking. We heard ourselves saying that the real America was elsewhere, in the white frame houses and church spires of New England; yet we knew that we talked foolishly—we were not Granville Hicks and we looked ludicrous in his opinions. The Elevated, half a block away, interrupting us every time a train passed, gave us the lie on

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THE American has for decades been stigmatized in European writing as the materialist par excellence. MARY McCARTHY, who here takes a fresh look at this traditional belief, wrote *The Company She Keeps* (1942), a novel that has received considerable critical acclaim, and has written literary and dramatic criticism for *Partisan Review*, the *Nation*, the *New Republic*, and other periodicals. Miss McCarthy was born in Seattle, Washington, and is a graduate of Vassar.

schedule, every eight minutes. But if the elm-shaded village green was a false or at least an insufficient address for the *genius loci* we honored, where then was it to be found? Surveyed from the vantage point of Europe, this large continent seemed suddenly deficient in objects of virtue. The Grand Canyon, Yellowstone Park, Jim Hill's mansion in St. Paul, Monticello, the blast furnaces of Pittsburgh, Mount Rainier, the yellow observatory at Amherst, the little-theater movement in Cleveland, Ohio, a Greek revival house glimpsed from a car window in a lost river-town in New Jersey—these things were too small for the size of the country. Each of them, when pointed to, diminished in interest with the lady's perspective of distance. There was no sight that in itself seemed to justify her crossing of the Atlantic.

If she was interested in "conditions," that was a different matter. There are conditions everywhere; it takes no special genius to produce them. Yet would it be an act of hospitality to invite a visitor to a lynching? Unfortunately, nearly all the "sights" in America fall under the head of conditions. Hollywood, Reno, the share-croppers' homes in the South, the mining towns of Pennsylvania, Coney Island, the Chicago stockyards, Macy's, the Dodgers, Harlem, even Congress, the forum of our liberties, are spectacles rather than sights, to use the term in the colloquial sense of "Didn't he make a holy spectacle of himself?" An Englishman of almost any political opinion can show a visitor through the Houses of Parliament with a sense of pride or at least of indulgence toward his national foibles and traditions. The American, if he has a spark of national feeling, will be humiliated by the very prospect of a foreigner's visit to Congress—these, for the most part, illiterate hacks whose fancy vests are spotted with gravy, and whose speeches, hypocritical, unctuous, and slovenly, are spotted also with the gravy of political patronage, these persons are a reflection on the democratic process rather than of it; they expose it in its underwear. In European legislation, we are told, a great deal of shady business goes on in private,

behind the scenes. In America, it is just the opposite, anything good, presumably, is accomplished *in camera*, in the committee-rooms.

It is so with all our institutions. For the visiting European, a trip through the United States has, almost inevitably, the character of an exposé, and the American, on his side, is tempted by love of his country to lock the inquiring tourist in his hotel room and throw away the key. His contention that the visible and material America is not the real or the only one is more difficult to sustain than was the presumption of the "other" Germany behind the Nazi steel.

TO SOME extent a citizen of any country will feel that the tourist's view of his homeland is a false one. The French will tell you that you have to go into their homes to see what the French people are really like. The intellectuals in the Left Bank cafés are not the real French intellectuals, etc., etc. In Italy, they complain that the tourist must not judge by the *ristorantes*; there one sees only black-market types. But in neither of these cases is the native really disturbed by the tourist's view of his country. If Versailles or Giotto's bell-tower in Florence do not tell the whole story, they are still not incongruous with it; you do not hear a Frenchman or an Italian object when these things are noticed by a visitor. With the American, the contradiction is more serious. He must, if he is to defend his country, repudiate its visible aspect almost entirely. He must say that its parade of phenomenology, its billboards, super-highways, even its skyscrapers, not only fail to represent the inner essence of his country but in fact contravene it. He may point, if he wishes, to certain beautiful objects, but here too he is in difficulties, for nearly everything that is beautiful and has not been produced by nature belongs to the 18th century, to a past with which he has very little connection, and which his ancestors, in many or most cases, had no part in building. Beacon Street and the Boston Common are very charming in the 18th-century manner, so are the sea captains' houses

in the Massachusetts ports, and the ruined plantations of Louisiana, but an American from Brooklyn or the Middle West or the Pacific Coast finds the style of life embodied in them as foreign as Europe; indeed, the first sensation of a Westerner, coming upon Beacon Hill and the gold dome of the State House, is to feel that at last he has traveled "abroad." The American, if he is to speak the highest truth about his country, must refrain from pointing at all. The virtue of American civilization is that it is unmateri-  
 alistic.

This statement may strike a critic as whimsical or perverse. Everybody knows, it will be said, that America has the most materialistic civilization in the world, that Americans care only about money, they have no time or talent for living; look at radio, look at advertising, look at life insurance, look at the tired business man, at the Frigidaires and the Fords. In answer, the reader is invited first to look into his own heart and inquire whether he personally feels himself to be represented by these things, or whether he does not, on the contrary, feel them to be irrelevant to him, a necessary evil, part of the conditions of life. Other people, he will assume, care about them very much: the man down the street, the entire population of Detroit or Scarsdale, the back-country farmer, the urban poor or the rich. But he accepts these objects as imposed on him by a collective "otherness" of desire, an otherness he has not met directly but whose existence he infers from the number of automobiles, Frigidaires, or television sets he sees around him. Stepping into his new Buick convertible, he knows that he would gladly do without it, but imagines that to his neighbor, who is just backing *his* out of the driveway, this car is the motor of life. More often, however, the otherness is projected farther afield, onto a different class or social group, remote and alien. Thus the rich, who would like nothing better, they think, than for life to be a perpetual fishing trip with the trout grilled by a native guide, look patronizingly upon the whole apparatus of American civilization as a cheap Christmas present to the

poor, and city people see the radio and the washing-machine as the farm-wife's solace.

It can be argued, of course, that the subjective view is prevaricating, possession of the Buick being nine-tenths of the social law. But who has ever met, outside of advertisements, a true parishioner of this church of Mammon? A man may take pride in a car, and a housewife in her new sink or wallpaper, but pleasure in new acquisitions is universal and eternal—an Italian man with a new gold tooth, a French bibliophile with a new edition, a woman with a new baby, a philosopher with a new thought, all these people are rejoicing in progress, in man's power to enlarge and improve. Before men showed off new cars, they showed off new horses; it is alleged against modern man that he did not make the car; but his grandfather did not make the horse either. What is imputed to Americans is something quite different, an abject dependence on material possessions, an image of happiness as packaged by a manufacturer, content in a can. This view of American life is strongly urged by advertising agencies. We know the "others," of course, because we meet them every week in full force in the *New Yorker* or the *Saturday Evening Post*, those brightly colored families of dedicated consumers, waiting in unison on the porch for the dealer to deliver the new car, gobbling the new cereal ("Gee, Mom, is it good for you too?"), lining up to bank their paychecks, or fearfully anticipating the industrial accident and the insurance-check that will "compensate" for it. We meet them also, more troll-like underground, in the subway placards, in the ferociously complacent One-A-Day family, and we hear their courtiers sing to them on the radio of Ivory or Supersuds. The thing, however, that repels us in these advertisements is their naive falsity to life. Who are these advertising men kidding, besides the European tourist? Between the tired, sad, gentle faces of the strangers around us and these grinning Holy Families, there exists no possibility of even a wishful identification. We take a vitamin

pill with the hope of feeling (possibly) a little less tired, but the superstition of buoyant health emblazoned in the bright, ugly pictures has no more power to move us than the blood of St. Januarius.

Familiarity has perhaps bred contempt in us Americans: until you have had a washing machine, you cannot imagine how little difference it will make to you. Europeans still believe that money brings happiness, witness the bought journalist, the bought politician, the bought general, the whole venality of European literary life, inconceivable in this country of the dollar. It is true that America produces and consumes more cars, soap, and bathtubs than any other nation, but we live among these objects rather than by them. Americans build skyscrapers; Le Corbusier worships them. Ehrenburg, our Soviet critic, fell in love with the Check-O-Mat in American railway stations, writing home paragraphs of song to this gadget—while deploring American materialism. When an American heiress wants to buy a man, she at once crosses the Atlantic. The only really materialistic people I have ever met have been Europeans.

The strongest argument for the un-materialistic character of American life is the fact that we tolerate conditions that are, from a materialistic point of view, intolerable. What the foreigner finds most objectionable in American life is its lack of basic comfort. No nation with any sense of material well-being would endure the food we eat, the cramped apartments we live in, the noise, the traffic, the crowded subways and buses. American life, in large cities, at any rate, is a perpetual assault on the senses and the nerves; it is out of asceticism, out of unworldliness, precisely, that we bear it.

**T**HIS republic was founded on an unworldly assumption, a denial of "the facts of life." It is manifestly untrue that all men are created equal; interpreted in worldly terms, this doctrine has resulted in a pseudo-quality, that is, in standardization, in an equality of things rather than of persons. The inalienable rights to life, liberty,

and the pursuit of happiness appear, in practice, to have become the inalienable right to a bathtub, a flush toilet, and a can of Spam. Left-wing critics of America attribute this result to the intrusion of capitalism; right-wing critics see it as the logical dead end of democracy. Capitalism has certainly played its part, mass production in itself demanding large-scale distribution of uniform goods, till the consumer today is the victim of the manufacturer who launches on him a regiment of products for which he must make house-room in his soul. The buying impulse, in its original force and purity, was not nearly so crass, however, or so meanly acquisitive as many radical critics suppose. The purchase of a bathtub was the exercise of a spiritual right. The immigrant or the poor native American bought a bathtub, not because he wanted to take a bath, but because he wanted to be in a *position* to do so. This remains true in many fields today; possessions, when they are desired, are not wanted for their own sakes but as tokens of an ideal state of freedom, fraternity, and franchise. "Keeping up with the Joneses" is a vulgarization of Jefferson's concept, but it too is a declaration of the rights of man, and decidedly unfeasible and visionary. Where for a European, a fact is a fact, for us Americans, the real, if it is relevant at all, is simply symbolic appearance. We are a nation of twenty million bathrooms, with a humanist in every tub. One such humanist I used to hear of on Cape Cod had, on growing rich, installed two toilets side by side in his marble bathroom, on the model of the two-seater of his youth. He was a clear case of Americanism, hospitable, gregarious, and impractical, a theorist of perfection. Was his dream of the conquest of poverty a vulgar dream or a noble one, a material demand or a spiritual insistence? It is hard to think of him as a happy man, and in this too he is characteristically American, for the parity of the radio, the movies, and the washing machine has made Americans sad, reminding them of another parity of which these things were to be but emblems.

The American does not enjoy his pos-



sessions because sensory enjoyment was not his object, and he lives sparsely and thinly among them, in the monastic discipline of Scarsdale or the barracks of Stuyvesant Town. Only among certain groups where franchise, socially speaking, has not been achieved, do pleasure and material splendor constitute a life-object and an occupation. Among the outcasts—Jews, Negroes, Catholics, and homosexuals—excluded from the communion of ascetics, the love of fabrics, gaudy show, and rich possessions still anachronistically flaunts itself. Once a norm has been reached, differing in the different classes, financial ambition itself seems to fade away. The self-made man finds, to his anger, his son uninterested in money; you have shirtsleeves to shirtsleeves in three generations. The great financial empires are a thing of the past. Recent immigrants—movie magnates and gangsters particularly—retain their acquisitiveness, but how long is it since anyone in the general public has murmured, wonderingly, "as rich as Rockefeller"?

**I**F THE dream of American fraternity had ended simply in this, the value of humanistic and egalitarian strivings would be seriously called into question. Jefferson, the Adamsses, Franklin, Madison, would be in the position of Dostoevsky's Grand Inquisitor, who, desiring to make the Kingdom of God incarnate on earth, inaugurated the kingdom of the devil. If the nature of matter is such that the earthly paradise, once realized, becomes always the paradise of the earthly, and a spiritual conquest of matter becomes always an enslavement of spirit (conquered Gaul conquered Rome), then the atomic bomb is, as has been argued, the logical result of the Enlightenment, and the land of opportunity is, precisely, the land of death. This position, however, is a strictly materialist one, for it asserts the Fact of the bomb as the one tremendous truth: subjective attitudes are irrelevant; it does not matter what we think or feel; possession again in this case is nine-tenths of the law.

It must be admitted that there is a great similarity between the nation with its new

bomb and the consumer with his new Buick. In both cases, there is a disinclination to use the product, stronger naturally in the case of the bomb, but somebody has manufactured the thing, and there seems to be no way *not* to use it, especially when everybody else will be doing so. Here again the argument of the "others" is invoked to justify our own procedures—if we had not invented the bomb, the Germans would have; the Soviet Union will have it in a year, etc., etc. This is keeping up with the Joneses indeed, our national propagandists playing the role of the advertising men in persuading us of the "others" intentions.

It seems likely at this moment that we will find no way of not using the bomb, yet those who argue theoretically that this machine is the true expression of our society leave us, in practice, with no means of opposing it. We must differentiate ourselves from the bomb if we are to avoid using it, and in private thought we do, distinguishing the bomb sharply from our daily concerns and sentiments, feeling it as an otherness that waits outside to descend on us, an otherness already destructive of normal life, since it prevents us from planning or hoping by depriving us of a future. And this inner refusal of the bomb is also a legacy of our past; it is a denial of the given, of the power of circumstances to shape us in their mold. Unfortunately, the whole asceticism of our national character, our habit of living in but not through an environment, our alienation from objects, prepare us to endure the bomb but not to confront it.

Passivity and not aggressiveness is the dominant trait of the American character. The movies, the radio, the super-highway have softened us up for the atom bomb; we have lived with them without pleasure, feeling them as a coercion on our natures, a coercion coming seemingly from nowhere and expressing nobody's will. The new coercion finds us without the habit of protest; we are dissident but apart.

The very "negativeness," then, of American intellectuals is not a mark of their separation from our society, but a true expression

of its separation from itself. We too are dissident but inactive. Intransigent on paper, in "real life" we conform; yet we do not feel ourselves to be dishonest, for to us the real life is rustling paper and the mental life is flesh. And even in our mental life we are critical and rather unproductive; we leave it to the "others," the best-sellers, to create.

THE fluctuating character of American life must, in part, have been responsible for this dissociated condition. Many an immigrant arrived in this country with the most materialistic expectations, hoping, not to escape from a world in which a man was the sum of his circumstances, but to become a new sum of circumstances himself. But this hope was self-defeating; the very ease with which new circumstances were acquired left insufficient time for a man to live into them: all along a great avenue in Minneapolis the huge chateaux were dark at night, save for a single light in each kitchen, where the family still sat, Swedish-style, about the stove. The pressure of democratic thought, moreover, forced a rising man often, unexpectedly, to recognize that he was *not* his position: a speeding ticket from a village constable could lay him low. Like the agitated United Nations delegates who got summonses on the Merritt Parkway, he might find the shock traumatic: a belief had been destroyed. The effect of these combined difficulties turned the new American into a nomad, who camped out in his circumstances, as it were, and was never assimilated to them. And, for the native American, the great waves of internal migration had the same result. The homelessness of the American, migrant in geography and on the map of finance, is the whole subject of the American realists of our period. European readers see in these writers only violence and brutality. They miss not only the pathos but the nomadic virtues associated with it, generosity, hospitality, equity, directness, politeness, simplicity of relations—traits which, together with a certain gentle timidity (as of *unpracticed* nomads), comprise the American character. Unobserved also is a peculiar

nakedness, a look of being shorn of everything, that is very curiously American, corresponding to the spare wooden desolation of a frontier town and the bright thinness of the American light. The American character looks always as if it had just had a rather bad hair-cut, which gives it, in our eyes at any rate, a greater humanity than the European, which even among its beggars has an all too professional air.

The openness of the American situation creates the pity and the terror; status is no protection; life for the European is a career; for the American, it is a hazard. Slaves and women, said Aristotle, are not fit subjects for tragedy, but kings, rather, and noble men, men, that is, not defined by circumstance but outside it and seemingly impervious. In America we have, subjectively speaking, no slaves and no women; the efforts of PM and the Stalinized playwrights to introduce, like the first step to servitude, a national psychology of the "little man" have been, so far, unrewarding. The little man is one who is embedded in status; things can be done for and to him generically by a central directive; his happiness flows from statistics. This conception mistakes the national passivity for abjection. Americans will not eat this humble pie; we are still nature's noblemen. Yet no tragedy results, though the protagonist is everywhere; dissociation takes the place of conflict, and the drama is mute.

This humanity, this plain and heroic accessibility, was what we would have liked to point out to the visiting Existentialist as our national glory. Modesty perhaps forbade and a lack of concrete examples—how could we point to ourselves? Had we done so, she would not have been interested. To a European, the humanity of an intellectual is of no particular moment; it is the barber pole that announces his profession and the hair oil dispensed inside. Europeans, moreover, have no curiosity about American intellectuals; we are insufficiently representative of the brute. Yet this anticipated and felt disparagement was not the whole cause of our reticence. We were silent for another reason: we were waiting to be discovered. Columbus,



however, passed on, and this, very likely, was the true source of our humiliation. But this experience also was peculiarly American. We all expect to be found in the murk of otherness; it looks to us very easy since we know we are there. Time after time, the explorers have failed to see us. We have been patient, for the happy ending is our national belief. Now, however, that the future has been shut off from us, it is necessary for us to declare ourselves, at least for the record.

WHAT it amounts to, in verity, is that we are the poor. This humanity we would claim for ourselves is the legacy, not only of the Enlightenment, but of the thousands and thousands of European peasants and poor townspeople who came here bringing their humanity and their sufferings with them. It is the absence of a stable upper class that is responsible for much of the vulgarity of the American scene. Should we blush before the visitor for this deficiency? The ugliness of American decoration, American entertainment, American literature—is not this the visible expression of the impoverishment of the European masses, a manifestation of all the backwardness, deprivation, and want that arrived here in boatloads from Europe? The immense popularity of American movies

abroad demonstrates that Europe is the unfinished negative of which America is the proof. The European traveler, viewing with distaste a movie palace or a motorola, is only looking into the terrible concavity of his continent of hunger inverted startlingly into the convex. Our civilization, deformed as it is outwardly, is still an accomplishment; all this had to come to light.

America is indeed a revelation, though not quite the one that was planned. Given a clean slate, man, it was hoped, would write the future. Instead, he has written his past. This past, inscribed on billboards, ball parks, dance halls, is not seemly, yet its objectification is a kind of disburdenment. The past is at length outside. It does not disturb as it does Europeans, for our relation with it is both more distant and more familiar. We cannot hate it, for to hate it would be to hate poverty, our eager ancestors, and ourselves.

If there were time, American civilization could be seen as a beginning, even a favorable one, for we have only to look around us to see what a lot of sensibility a little ease will accrue. The children surpass the fathers and Louis B. Mayer cannot be preserved intact in his descendants. . . . Unfortunately, as things seem now, posterity is not around the corner.

# IMPROVISATIONS ON THEMES FROM MY LIFE

## *Chapters from a Musician's Autobiography*

ARTUR SCHNABEL

### In Preface

THE time was autumn 1945, the place an auditorium of the University of Chicago. Artur Schnabel—for the first time on a platform without being prepared—was talking from the university's Alexander White Chair, endowed "to put students in touch with people who are not academic." Although some years before he had conducted a class at the Berlin Academy of Music, his White seminar was hardly professional.

Indeed, it was strictly non-professorial. He held ten conferences, which he called "puzzle pieces," each followed by a period of discussion. The dialectics were Socratic, with variations by Schnabel.

It is the pianist speaking: "Just improvisations?"

The student: "Yes, Mr. Schnabel."

"But that has nothing to do with art. Art is never improvisation."

"Thank you, Mr. Schnabel. I don't agree with you, though."

"All right; you tell me how improvisation can be art."

"I don't know much about art, so I can

speaking freely. Offhand, I'd call improvisation the only art there is. In other words, it's taking something and introducing yourself into it, and out of that arises something new."

"Well—what do we call works of art? Do you think that they've been improvised or that they're works of art?"

"Mr. Schnabel, I've read Beethoven's biography, and it said that it took ten men to get him to the piano in front of his audience."

"Piano movers?" asked the famous lecturer, adding something caustic on the credibility of the biographies of famous men.

Schnabel loves debate. He surprises by novel, often paradoxical turns and convinces by his own conviction. The themes touched upon in his seminar ranged from music and musicians to art in general, history, travel, education, politics, Jews, Germans, Viennese, Americans, and people of a dozen other countries.

No question was barred; indeed, it was only by this lack of limitations that these conferences came about at all.

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THIS autobiographical memoir, by the pianist ARTUR SCHNABEL, of a career that took him "from the last flowering of individualism to the first unfolding of collectivism," grew out of an invitation by Chancellor Hutchins of the University of Chicago to lecture there on "whatever comes into your mind." HERTHA PAULI, who made this selection from stenographic notes of Mr. Schnabel's improvised discourses, explains the circumstances in further detail in the preface. Miss Pauli is Mr. Schnabel's niece. Her latest book, on the Statue of Liberty, is soon to be published. This is the first of three chapters of Mr. Schnabel's memoirs that will appear in COMMENTARY.

WHEN Chancellor Robert Hutchins of the University of Chicago first broached the subject, Schnabel politely declined. "You credit me," he wrote, "with abilities outside the sphere of my natural assignment. I, on the contrary, am quite certain I have no other gifts beyond some of those required by that assignment." He described himself as, "so to say, a direct musician—one in charge of the production of music. The indirect musician, by now a well-established character, takes music to pieces, relates it to extra-musical conditions, proceeds methodically, analytically—for which I have no tal-

ent whatsoever—and undertakes to represent music chiefly as words and figures. The direct musician, to use a not quite correct simile, is a gardener; the indirect one, a botanist. . . .”

As a matter of fact the gardener had previously invaded the botanical field, also at Chicago. Three lectures which he delivered there in 1940 had in 1942 been published in book form by the Princeton University Press, under the meaningful title, *Music and the Line of Most Resistance*. Yet a full-fledged lecture course appeared to the musician as a deviation from, if not an aberration of, his real task.

“The only medium by which to establish contact with musical ideas,” he wrote to Hutchins, “is tones. They are the medium of expression in which I have professional training. With words I am a dilettante. . . . Anybody who communicates knowledge at the University of Chicago must, of course, be an expert at least in the technique of communicating through words and figures. To acquire such technique takes time. Direct music takes up all of my time. I think it is true that experts range from nonentities to validities. Yet they are all experts. The amateur, even with the most vivacious mind, should stay at home.”

If in the end he did not stay at home, Schnabel informed his audience, it was because Mr. Hutchins had personally and “successfully attacked and killed” his objections. He need not even mention music, Hutchins had said. “Talk about whatever comes into your mind—the love life of lobsters, for instance.” The Alexander White Chair did not limit its occupants to their own fields. They were free, they even were supposed to talk about whatever struck them as important.

Most important to Schnabel, outside of music, seems harmony among men. Yet he does not believe in art as a means to achieve it. “I’ve heard this talk all my life,” he told the students, “about the power of art to bring people nearer to each other; and that peace would come if only more music were circulated and exchanged. But

I have seen people moved, as deeply moved and as responsive to music as possible, and next morning they would go into activities which you might well call criminal and inhuman. I think that no piece of music has ever changed a man’s vote.”

The artist, Schnabel thinks, must go outside his art to pursue his goal of harmony—a harmony based on variety, not standardization. The ivory tower used to be visible to all and an object of reverence; whoever could not get in gazed up in awe from outside and helped maintain the tenants. But today Schnabel finds the center conquered by the outskirts and the ex-tenants driven toward the circumference.

ARTUR SCHNABEL has always been ardently anti-nationalist. The recent past, especially the change in perspective accomplished by the release of atomic energy, has made him a firm believer in the necessity of a world government. And yet, today, in America, he calls himself “for the first time a patriotic citizen” and reasons that in Europe he could not even be a European, merely an Austrian, while here “all America is European with a self-administered shot of African and Asiatic.”

He is a conscious Jew. Yet he insists that he cannot “feel Jewish” as a thing apart—that he would not feel differently as a Gentile and can only feel as a human being. He remembers a recent trip to Washington when he went to the dining car and suddenly was surrounded by ferocious-looking, black-bearded “Fra Diavolos” who turned out to be on their way to a Mizrachi convention. They seemed like a cross of Wild West and Wild East, and Artur Schnabel, the Austrian Jew, felt strange among them. What do Jews have in common? Schnabel can see nothing but a heritage of experiences, and a sense of dignity which may derive from the Bible, or simply from the decency which leads men to reject baptism as an evasion of a common, often not too pleasant, fate.

The anti-nationalist in Artur Schnabel considers it tragic that just now—when hope

for an end of all nationalisms should be fostered—the Jews are forced to develop one of their own. He knows that they cannot remain in Central Europe as living tombstones and embodied memories of horror; but the most harrowing thought to him is that the most desired home should be a place where their equality and happiness seem just as problematic now as they turned out to be in previous refuges.

It was the brilliance of his vivacious mind, his startling originality, his ineffable charm that got the musician invited to Chicago. But what eventually made him accept was the feeling that his outlook and experience, musical and otherwise, might have instructive values. "I'll try it," he said, and decided—"after long thought about it and discussion of it with some of my friends"—to talk about himself.

"I would give a report, so to speak, of my career as a musician, which started when I was seven years old. I am now sixty-three." It was a career which took him "from the last flowering of individualism to the first unfolding of collectivism," which brought him "almost everywhere where the art of music has a market," and which let him encounter "very many people of great talent, and some others of great reputation." He would prepare no texts for this "experiment and venture" out of his field, which he began on October 9, 1945, and of which the following is a condensation. He would not lecture—he would improvise.

"I'll supply the pieces," he told the Chicago students, "but you will have to put them together to get the picture. I hope the pieces will fit."—HERTHA PAULI.

### I. Beginnings

**I** WAS born in a small Austrian village. Its name is Lipnik; it had—and has, I hear—neither a railway station nor a post office, and when I'm asked to give my data for reference, I simply say Lipnik, Austria. Then curious or conscientious people look at a map of Austria and find a place called Lipnik which has a post office, in the Austrian province of Carinthia—wonderful

mountains there, and the population yodels—and so now I keep finding myself listed in reference books as "the Carinthian pianist." Well, it's a historic error of little importance.

The Lipnik where I was born belonged to the Austrian section of Poland. It was a little village, rather poor, a kind of suburb of a small town named Biala, which was the twin of Bielitz, a somewhat larger town belonging to the Austrian province of Silesia and reached over a bridge under which I never saw any water flow. The three places were very different socially. In Bielitz there lived the so-called "upper classes," chiefly composed of Germans and some well-to-do Jews. They were rather snooty, but I have to admit that their town, as I remember it, was much cleaner than the other two places, and the smell of it is not so strong in my memory. In Biala, which was more of an agricultural town, there were many Poles, but they were not considered real Poles; I remember that in Austria they were generally called "Water-Poles"—diluted, so to speak. Finally, mixed in, there were the poorer Jews. It was a lively place; if Bielitz was cleaner, Biala, where the Poles and Jews lived, was more lively. And Lipnik, the suburb of this Polish-Jewish town, was apparently still poorer. I remember only the one street—which was the whole place—and that the pride of it was the house of a man with a still. His son became a musician and later on one of my intimate friends.

My parents were Austrian subjects; their religion was Jewish. They were only mildly Orthodox (my grandparents and other relatives were strictly Orthodox) and when we moved to Vienna eventually they gave it up almost altogether. But all these poor or middle-class Jewish families were very ambitious to help their children rise into a higher category of existence. When I was six, my sister got piano lessons. My mother—I don't know how true this is—told me that without lessons I was much faster in learning to play than my sister. I simply went to the piano and did what was expected of her; so her teacher thought that a boy doing that must have talent, and began to teach me.



I also remember that there were two other piano teachers, one of whom lived in the tower of a rather ugly castle owned by some Polish nobleman in the cleaner town. Each time I played for him he suddenly would disappear for a while through a trap door. That impressed me; also, it frightened me. Today I have a vague idea what he may have been doing while he was gone: I think he was enjoying a bottle of wine. Another smell maybe—I have no very definite memories of my first ten years, except for places and smells. They must have been strong.

For my general education I had a tutor, an old man, bearded and not too tidy. I learned Hebrew from him—of which, unfortunately, I don't know a word any more. I did not keep it up; it was taught to me only from my fifth to my sixth or seventh year.

When I was seven, my teacher thought I should be examined by some experts, to see whether I had the equipment to become a professional musician. I was taken to Vienna, to Professor Hans Schmidt, who taught at the famous Vienna Conservatory, established early in the nineteenth century by the *Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde*. He also was the author of the 500,000 daily exercises—perhaps not that many; I do not wish to exaggerate. He accepted me as a pupil. Then some other people heard me—music-lovers—and they apparently thought I had the equipment, for from my seventh year on I was a professional musician, by the decision of my parents and these friends. I had no choice. They made me a pianist.

For the next eight years three very rich families supported me from their budget for conscience relief, without ever asking to see or hear me. For me, this was sheer luck. I got monthly allowances which my mother and later I myself had to fetch from their offices—just enough to cover the cost of living for myself, my mother, and my two sisters, who had come to Vienna with me. Many years later I once met a descendant of one of these families and told him that his grandfather had made it possible for me to study music; but he didn't react at all.

WHEN I came to Vienna, it naturally seemed to me an immense place, compared with what I had seen before—of course, when I later lived in Berlin, London, and New York, Vienna seemed rather little. I have never forgotten the first time my mother took me to the shopping center. People came all the way from the provinces to look at the window where the first factory-made shoes, imported from America, were on display. It impressed me enormously. I thought the shoes in the window looked practically like all shoes I had ever seen before; yet they were not as fine as the shoes shown in the windows of shoemakers and I remember that they were not even cheaper. A year later, perhaps, I saw a delivery car marked "Bread Factory" and that made a still deeper impression—maybe because I couldn't see why bread should not be baked by the people or the baker. In the year 2000 shoes will again be made by shoemakers—don't you agree? I think so. There'll be no other choice, and it will be much more attractive for people.

Vienna in the "Gay Nineties" was apparently in the eleventh hour of her existence as the "Ballroom of Europe," as she was named by somebody. There were three definite groups. The tenor of life was still set by the aristocracy; it was an aristocratic life, with the court as center and the Church, the army, and the bureaucracy following in hierarchic line. The members of all these groups seemed to do little work. Not to work was part of *noblesse oblige*, of course. They avoided work and did not compete in anything except in the functions of *noblesse*. (Besides, so as not to offend any of the four leading nationalities—the other ten were mere serfs—every higher government job in Austria-Hungary had to go to four men, a Czech, a Pole, a German and a Hungarian; and, of course, there was not enough work to go around. Even in my time typewriters were not allowed in Austrian government offices lest the work go too fast.)

The second group was the bourgeoisie—the politicians and the middle classes; and then there were the lower classes, including

the wine growers. (Very good wine was grown in the suburbs of Vienna.) They were a rather crude people, while the upper classes had great charm and elegance. It was, as I say, the eleventh hour of home culture—that culture which to my mind begins in the home and probably ends there as well. There was a kind of effort to enjoy these last performances of that culture, but the upper classes in Vienna seemed to know that they were doomed. It was the most charming, elegant, luxurious defeatism. The Viennese liked to joke about their weakness—as when they changed a German army communiqué in World War I: the Germans reported, “The situation is serious but not hopeless,” while the Austrians, on the contrary, considered it “hopeless but not serious.” This was very characteristic.

WHEN my family moved to Vienna with me, because I was ordered to become a professional musician, we first lived in a sort of ghetto. It was a voluntary ghetto—not compulsory, as in Czarist Russia—although the city of Vienna was then under the officially anti-Semitic régime of the well-known Dr. Karl Lueger. This anti-Semitism was very mild, if measured by recent events. Personally I did not suffer from it; I only retained a certain uneasiness in deserted streets after dark, for a favorite prank of adolescents in those days was the “teasing” (to put it mildly) of children whom they believed to be Jewish.

About the ghetto I don’t remember much. I remember the street, the synagogue, the grocer where I often went to get things that my mother had sent me for; I remember that the herrings always smelled of kerosene, because apparently they were kept in adjoining barrels. I also remember our family doctor. He was Dr. Ignaz Kreisler, the father of Fritz Kreisler, the violinist, whom I knew from boyhood on. Dr. Kreisler, according to my memory, was an angelic man with a beard, one of the kindest men I remember. Very soon, we moved to a somewhat less defined quarter.

There was a music store in Vienna at the

time, the only big store of its kind, where you could buy only music—no dolls yet, as in the music stores of today, or refrigerators and so on, and the owner, an interesting man who played a great part in Viennese music life in the second half of the nineteenth century, arranged a private concert to arouse interest in my talents. I played Mozart’s *D Minor Concerto*—alleged to be the most suitable piece for children—and the performance seems to have been successful—at least it won me the chance to be supported by those three rich families. But I was not exploited as a prodigy, because my parents, although ambitious, were not greedy. My father was not only not greedy, he was afraid of money; I think he must have shivered at the idea that I might be a prodigy. It was my mother who was more ambitious.

I distinctly remember that there were two other candidates for world fame in Vienna—two prodigies, both of my age, both coming from the same milieu from which I came, both getting much more publicity than I (who didn’t get any). These children often played at court; I never did, which of course disappointed my mother. The papers kept reporting that one or the other of these prodigies had played for the Emperor or the Crown Prince, while I wasn’t playing for anyone. So one day a friend of my family came and asked, “What about you? Did you see that Spielmann has played again, and has composed a polka and dedicated it to Archduke So-and-So, and you can look at it in Gutmann’s music store? Your name isn’t there.” According to my mother, I, at seven years of age, replied, “What does the Emperor know about music?” Well, maybe I did. I don’t know. My mother had a lot of imagination.

When I was nine, somebody told her that there was no sense in my continuing further with this dry, uninspiring Professor Schmidt. She was advised to take me to Professor Leschetitzky. He was not at a conservatory; he had no position; he was rather remote and never appeared anywhere in public; he hadn’t played for a long time.



My mother took me to see him. We had to wait for two hours—he was always late, and if you came for a lesson at 11 o'clock he would come at 1—but we immediately felt that this was a much more inspiring milieu. It was not only 500,000 exercises. Leschetitzky was remarkable; after I played something, he opened the piano score of *Cavalleria Rusticana*, which had been published only a week before, and asked me to sight-read. Apparently I played this to his satisfaction, for he accepted me as a pupil and asked his wife, Madame Essipoff, a very well-known virtuoso, to start teaching me. For a year he heard me only rarely. But Madame Essipoff was very kind, and I remember that she put a gulden on my hand—a silver coin almost as big as a silver dollar—and if I played one study by Czerny without dropping it, she gave it to me as a present, which was very nice. I have since changed my way of handling the piano: now, if I played a single tone that way, the coin would drop.

At Leschetitzky's I first got in touch with a more international world. He had pupils from all countries, especially from the United States. Paderewski had studied with him; they did not speak too well of each other, but Paderewski was such a sensation that American pupils flocked to Leschetitzky. Soon after my first lessons with him, he told me something which he was to repeat through the years and before many people: "You'll never be a pianist. You are a musician." Of course, I couldn't make anything of that.

LIVING in Vienna at that time were Brahms, Bruckner, Hugo Wolf, the young Gustav Mahler. It was the last flowering. One day, having heard that I ought to be instructed in composition, my mother took me to Mr. Anton Bruckner. I clearly remember the place and the street, even the house number. We went up, knocked at the door, and heard the slowly approaching sound of slippers. A bald-headed man opened the door—not very wide, just so that I could peep through. I saw a very dusty

foyer with some laurel wreaths piled up, and some music. "What do you want?"

My mother said, "I want to ask you to give my son lessons in theory."

He said, "I don't teach children," and closed the door. After that, I saw him only from a distance.

But I was in Brahms' rooms—only two rooms, practically without furniture; very different from the stars' fortresses on the hills above Hollywood that are so hugely impressive!—and I often went on Sunday excursions with Brahms and his friends. Before each meal he would ask me whether I was hungry, and after each meal, whether I'd had enough. Otherwise he didn't speak to me. Why should he speak to a child? But I saw him often. In his last years he came almost daily to the house of a family with three girls where I used to come on Sunday afternoons to play chamber music. I played and Brahms sat three or four rooms away, reading. I think he never listened—but last year, after playing somewhere, when I came home with the program book in my pocket and had nothing to do, I read in a sketch devoted to my career that Brahms heard me play at my first recital and was so impressed that I became his intimate friend. So, next time, I expect to read that I had breakfast with Palestrina.

I was also introduced to Anton Rubinstein, a rather theatrical man of wonderful appearance. He was very sweet to me, and if Brahms had never inquired after anything but my appetite, Rubinstein asked me to be on hand whenever he went to play a game of whist. Then he took me on his knees. I heard him play only once, his own compositions, but I got no impression. When I heard Brahms play his quartets I remember being immensely impressed by the great vitality and wonderful carelessness of his playing. It was in the grand style.

When I was eleven, Brahms' four piano pieces, Opus 119, were brand new, and since I was always allowed to choose what music I played for Leschetitzky, I got hold of these Brahms pieces, worked on them, and came to a lesson. They were still wet

from the printing press. Leschetitzky was furious. I'll never forget it, for it hurt me very much. He made a parody of one of the pieces, a caricature—cheapened it and vulgarized it, and then, thinking apparently that by choosing these pieces I had meant to criticize him, he fired me. I was not allowed to return for three months, until somebody went to him and patched up the rift. There never was another. I might add here that none of my teachers ever asked a fee for lessons; they all taught me for nothing. It was apparently taken for granted, not even mentioned.

**F**OR THE things other than music I had a tutor in Vienna, but I don't remember a thing about him. I didn't learn a thing either. I don't even remember any book; and when I was ten, somebody told my mother that I might get into trouble without regular schooling. She registered me at the high school; I passed somehow and attended for four or five months, studying some Latin, which turned out to be unnecessary, and seeming to fail completely in mathematics. Then I was taken out again, and I never went to another school in my life.

I had no contact with other boys, chiefly because my friends were the Leschetitzky pupils, all of them older. There was only one little girl—a very charming and talented little girl who finally came to this country a few years ago and died in Boston. She was not Jewish, but she could no longer stand it in Vienna under the Nazis; she was a most delicate artist. My great rival was a boy three or four years older, to whom Leschetitzky might have said, "You'll never be a musician; you are a pianist." He was wonderful. He is now living in pleasant retirement after many years as a successful, famous virtuoso with really elemental qualities and incomparably thunderous octaves. But he never changed; when he was forty he was still thundering octaves. It was not as effective as it had been at fourteen.

Ossip Gabrilowitsch and Ignaz Friedman were colleagues of mine; also Mark Twain's

daughter, Clara, who later married Gabrilowitsch. I remember having been at tea parties in Mark Twain's suite at the Hotel Metropole; I remember seeing him—his appearance was most impressive—but I don't remember that he ever talked to me.

When I was twelve, my mother and sisters left Vienna to join my father, who was still in business in the town where I was born. For three years I lived with strangers as a sort of roomer. The first family I stayed with was rather dull and I hardly remember it. The second was rather lively. There were three sons and one daughter, who was younger than I; the sons were students at the university and always rehearsing for duels. I remember seeing them down a big jug of beer in one gulp—it was my introduction to academic life. One of the three, a dark, daring fellow, was my tutor, but I don't recall learning anything from him either.

Occasionally I went to the opera or the theater. Such a visit took eight hours—because I had to go at 3 o'clock and stand in line until 7, when the gates were opened and everyone wildly raced up four flights of stairs in the hope of catching a seat on the fourth balcony. We had a very good time waiting; we would bring sandwiches and discuss the world and everything. There were many musicians—I often raced Arnold Schoenberg on the stairs—and we didn't see or hear too much, but I've rarely enjoyed theatrical performances as much as then.

In Vienna, as I told you, this was the last performance of brilliance and charm. On the surface, at least, there was a lively activity in intellectual and other fields; violent arguments were always going on between conservatives and progressives, although the violence was not quite genuine. The young people were in contact with the old and took part in their discussions. The contemporaries we discussed were Tolstoy, Nietzsche, Dostoevsky, and Ibsen—all brand-new. I saw the debut of Eleanora Duse, the famous Italian actress. I was present at the debut of Yvette Guilbert, the

famous French *disease*—although I, as a boy of fifteen, had no right to be there. Sleeping late in the morning, I could be present at discussions lasting into the night, of problems ranging from positivism to occultism—but all of this, in Vienna, had the smell of decay.

IT WAS not a new phenomenon; the decline and decay of Austria had started two centuries before, with the rise of Prussia. What is called Austria now is, of course, a mere name; Austria had been only part of the Austrian-Hungarian monarchy. What remained as Austria after the first world War was a crippled, impotent *bon vivant* neither fit to live nor able to die; what it will become now I don't know.

When I was there, life was very pleasant in Vienna—although I myself did not feel very happy, because this defeatism somehow hanging in the air paralyzed creative desires and energy. It was simply "Have all the fun you can," although in a very elegant and traditional way. There

was an atmosphere—and I felt it as a child—of what I might call playful morbidity that was cherished in Vienna; there was a kind of atrophy, a kind of withering. And the upshot of it was that instead of Vienna attracting talent, as it had done before, talent was now deserting Vienna.

There was one family among my Viennese friends who had relatives in Berlin greatly interested in the arts, and one day they told me, "We have an invitation for you from our brother in Berlin to come there and stay with him as long as you like." I decided to go to Germany. Germany was adored rather secretly by the Viennese, with a kind of contemptuous awe. They considered the Germans barbaric and boorish in the light of Vienna's good food and beautifully dressed women, its soft speech and charming manners, but still they had a terrible inferiority complex toward them. When I finally arrived in Berlin, it was not as if I had left Vienna alone but as if I had almost left the nineteenth century.

## TO EDMUND

### HEINRICH HEINE

A brotherly forbearance  
Has united us for ages:  
You, you tolerate my breathing  
And I tolerate your rages.

Just a few benighted eras  
Found you feeling rather odd,  
Coloring your loving-pious  
Little talons with my blood.

Later we became more cordial,  
Day by day our friendship grew—  
For I also started raging  
And I almost seem like you.

THIS poem appears in a letter written by Heine to Moses Moser (October 25, 1824) on the subject of *The Rabbi of Bacherach*, which Heine was then engaged in writing. This translation appears here by permission of Schocken Books.

## THE LIBERAL'S VOTE AND '48

### *What Price Third Party?*

JAMES A. WECHSLER

**T**HIRD party talk is rising again. Whether such a movement will formally emerge in 1948 remains highly uncertain, depending on such varied and unpredictable factors as the economic state of the nation, the psychic condition of Henry Wallace, and the course of United States-Soviet relations. But the signs are many that a significant number of liberals are seriously pondering the formation of a new party, and that the campaign to create it will be a continuing and explosive development on the American scene for the next twelve months and beyond.

Yet there is little evidence that such a project, under any of the diverse auspices now offered, would be a more distinguished episode in political history than the abortive 1936 adventure of one William Lemke, one of the nation's most swiftly forgotten men. Nor does it seem likely to achieve the scope of the 1924 crusade led by "Fighting Bob" La Follette, which perished with him less than a year after Election Day. In the pres-

ent setting a third party might offer an emotional escape-mechanism for troubled progressive souls. But most omens indicate it would be a creaky bandwagon, rattling loudly toward nowhere and creating confusion along every mile of the road.

**A**T THIS juncture the most aggressive promoters of the third party plan are the Communists, for reasons that are as obvious as they are cynical. Like good soldiers they are simply carrying out the current Kremlin line of promoting internal conflict and disunity everywhere. In those terms, they visualize an "independent third party" as a potential source of joyous obstructionism and upheaval, further dividing the United States, strengthening discontent by strengthening the hand of conservative isolationism, and frustrating any American effort to cope with Russia on the political battlefields of Europe. Their stand, as always, is predicated on the needs of Russian foreign policy; if some sudden rapprochement between this country and the Soviet Union were to be achieved they would enthusiastically return to the Truman fold, abandon their third party theses overnight, and drop Mr. Wallace into the nearest political graveyard.

The third party idea is far from being the exclusive property of the Communists and their faithful camp-followers, however. Were that the case, it would be provoking less serious attention. The Communists have achieved only minor negative successes in this perverse country, and these only where they could mask their own identity. More frequently they have bestowed the kiss of death on those whom they have embraced. Unhappily, in the current agitation for a new party, Mr. Wallace has lifted them from the sectarian obscurity of Union

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THE perennial dilemma of the liberal—how best to make his vote and his political activity count within the American party system—is here discussed by one of Washington's best-informed journalists. JAMES A. WECHSLER is a member of the Washington bureau of the *New York Post*, and in his individual capacity is an active participant in liberal political organization. During the war he investigated German cartels with the American army. Mr. Wechsler was national editor of the newspaper *PM* for three years, and has been a frequent contributor to the *Nation*, *New Republic*, *Progressive* and other periodicals. His books include *Revolt on the Campus* (1936), *War Propaganda in the United States* (1940), written in collaboration with Harold Lavine, and a biography of John L. Lewis titled *Labor Baron*. He was born in New York City in 1915 and is a graduate of Columbia University.



Square mud-slinging to the respectable realm of political debate. In addition, the third party idea is being pushed with considerable vigor by men who have no ties with the Communists and who, in some cases, are vehemently anti-Communist.

The Socialist party, which possesses a recent record of virtually unbroken futility, is almost as fervent as the Communists in its clamor for a new "mass labor party," seemingly envisaged as another—and more densely populated—version of itself. Some of the ablest figures in labor's top echelons—David Dubinsky, Walter Reuther, and A. Philip Randolph—have indicated their responsiveness to third party proposals, although recognizing the catastrophic danger of a premature start. These groups, of course, insist that their new party must bar the door against the Communists who, in turn, emphasize that a true third party, loyal to the gospel of Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin, must fastidiously purge itself of Social Democratic heresies.

# I

MUCH more important politically are signs indicating that the third party idea has taken root in some popular soil. A recent Gallup poll indicated that roughly 10 per cent of the nation was ready to follow Wallace's banner into a new party. This rebellious stirring inside the present political structure seems to reflect two inescapable currents in present day America. One is the previously noted despair of the liberal-left, whose prophecies of gloom have been frequently vindicated but whose predictions of a new world a'comin' have—from the time of the Russian revolution—been repeatedly thwarted. Some professed but unorthodox Marxist writers have begun to question the happy ending of the proletarian drama in our times. With the revolutionary "loss of nerve," and failing any new formula for salvation, inevitably the familiar third party solution of American political discontent assumes new vitality.

But it would be a mistake to think that audiences that have gathered for Mr. Wal-

lace's barnstorming appearances are composed exclusively of the disciplined battalions of the Communist Left or the lifelong readers of the *Nation* and *New Republic*. The resentments of postwar America are authentic and widespread. In 1940 American isolationism held a far larger proportion of American adherents than most "interventionists" liked to acknowledge. In this autumn of 1947 the implied promise of "peace in our time," with its slogans of appeasement, still retains much of its glitter. The hostile indifference to Europe which has been a traditional leitmotif of populism still has vitality among Middle-Western Americans, and elsewhere. Ironically, some of Mr. Wallace's most affectionate disciples are the tenacious isolationists of pre-war times. And even in those areas where Mr. Wallace's views on foreign policy are regarded as naive or confused, he has achieved some stature as a voice of general discontent; whatever the reason, he is "agin' the government," and he becomes therefore a symbol of protest against the intolerable immediacies. The utter failure of the two major parties to confront the housing crisis is a deep, daily incitement to political maverickism. It touches the lives of millions who have little time or spirit for preoccupation with global crises. No less alarming is the surrender to vested interests embodied in the hasty destruction of price controls—for which both parties shared responsibility and for which we are now quite literally paying the price.

Underlying these concrete grievances is a widespread mental letdown. The emotional build-up for V-J day that dominated millions of GI's must have been apparent to anyone who ever set foot in an Army barracks. The American soldier—happily—always remained a civilian. Above all things he wanted to "settle down." His vision of the brave new world was hardly as luminous as that of editorial writers. He wanted merely security and peace and a chance to go back where he came from—to "better himself" if possible but at least to recapture an existence that was comparatively placid, plausible, and unregimented. In a word, the

status quo ante, with trimmings. Now, to state the anti-climax in the vernacular of the comic-strips, he is living with his mother-in-law.

So whether one views America in the sophisticated stereotypes of the liberal or with the prosaic perspective of the home-hunting GI, the climate for third party agitation seems superficially favorable. Tweedledum and Tweedledee have failed to deliver. Whatever his homely virtues, Mr. Truman can scarcely be described as inspirational; Mr. Wallace—although a little on the dull side himself—promises peace and plenty at virtually no inconvenience to the subscriber. And for those who have no confidence in Wallace the thought is advanced that new leaders will rise with the birth of the new party. Admittedly there will be initial defeats, but all of them will simply enhance the glory of ultimate victory, circa 1952. Meanwhile we have nothing to lose but the chains binding us to an obsolete, hopeless political alignment. Though we may temporarily open the door of high office to conservatives even more venal and less responsive to the popular will than the men who now rule our national affairs, their tenure will be short-lived.

However, when we soberly examine this tempting tale, the case against the third party appears overwhelming, whether stated in terms of the immediate world crisis which some liberals choose to minimize or the long-range rebuilding to which they are presumably dedicated. For the sources of present failure are also the rocks on which any third party enterprise will founder, with extremely unhappy consequences. The inability of progressives to exert commanding political influence since Franklin D. Roosevelt's death will not be altered in any fundamental way by the formation of a new national party. In effect the proposal is a romantic substitute for the tedious business of revaluation and reconstruction that is the most urgent assignment confronting liberals in America. The only possible beneficiaries of any third party formed in the foreseeable future would be the totalitarians of Left and Right, whose

political fortunes so frequently coincide at tumultuous points in history.

## II

A REALISTIC appraisal of existing alignments and competing political forces will indicate the essential misconception underlying the third party rhetoric. The transcending fact is that three major parties are operating now—Republican, Northern Democratic, and Southern Democratic—and none of them is fully controlled by a progressive bloc. The misconception is that this unhappy state of things would be swiftly changed if a new party, with a flaming new name and a brilliantly conceived emblem, were founded. But that is not the real dimension of the problem. The makings of a genuine political cleavage already exist. It is the liberals who have failed to give substance to the division.

The Grand Old Party, which big business must often regard as "a poor thing but mine own," is a fairly solid entity. Conservative control of the GOP is virtually unchallenged. The last session of Congress demonstrated the feebleness of the role played by such able and enlightened mavericks as Wayne Morse, George Aiken, and Charles Tobey. The widely-heralded non-conformism of Harold Stassen has an increasingly dubious tone. It was Stassen who recently advanced the suggestion that our loans to European nations be conditioned on their rejection of socialization. Ex-Senator La Follette, one of the nation's most talented legislators, was spurned by Wisconsin Republicans (with the enthusiastic connivance of Communist laborites) and his Senate seat—or a small portion thereof—is now occupied by one Joseph McCarthy, an earnest errand boy for the property lobby. Senator Taft, an erudite, convinced conservative, is unquestionably the most coherent spokesman of Republican thought. It is difficult to visualize any successful assault on Taft's leadership by the Morse - Aiken - Tobey tendency. Senator Langer, another party heretic with a flamboyantly irregular record that defies classification, is now threatening to build a pri-



vate third party of his own to register his wrath. While the behavior of these dissenters is a constant irritant to Senator Taft and his colleagues, it constitutes at best a type of random guerilla warfare. No revolt that could shake the GOP is in prospect pending its next great debacle at the polls; and it is questionable whether even such an event would take the party away from the plutocrats. On any realistic political chart, the GOP will have to be written down as basically a diehard conservative party.

The second major party is Northern Democratic. It may be morally appropriate to view the big city Democratic machines with loathing and indignation. It is also worth remembering that Mr. Roosevelt derived important strength for some of his worthiest combats from these machines; in more recent political skirmishes in which the "Left" was angrily arrayed against the "Right"—such as the battle over the Taft-Hartley law—Chicago's Ed Kelly and New York's Edward Flynn provided far more effective resistance than labor's most fluent voices.

All of which suggests that the machines, in their modern manifestations, do not present any insuperable road-block to the emergence of progressive platforms in the Northern Democratic party. They are wedded, for better or for worse, to the realization that the party must live in peace with organized labor and its liberal camp-followers to survive in these rugged times. Hague's noisy war against the CIO sounds in retrospect like the death-rattle of a period that is past. He lost. The Democratic "boss" may still offer rich sermonic material, but he is not quite the man he used to be. The degree of his painfully acquired "liberalism" will be almost directly proportionate to the alertness and purposefulness of the liberals and laborites with whom he must do business. And this is the crucial point. For it follows that in most areas the Democratic party can become the political (if not the emotional) equivalent of the third party so fondly conceived in many liberal imaginations. The oft repeated argument that progressives are powerless if they do not have "any place else

to go on Election Day"—and that therefore they are incapable of influencing the Democratic course—would hardly impress any informed ward-heeler; to him the threat to remain at home on Election Day is as persuasive as the threat of a bolt.

The retreats and ineptitudes of the Northern Democratic party are neither congenital nor calculated. They primarily mirror the muddle on the liberal-labor front, which we will examine in detail later.

This is not to say that the Northern Democratic party should be viewed as the exclusive instrument of liberal political activity. There are scattered regions where progressives may operate far more fruitfully under the Republican emblem, especially in territories where the GOP historically commands such popular allegiance that it would be foolhardy to challenge the myth. Even Landon carried Maine and Vermont. Certainly no one would contend that progressives should dedicate themselves to the rehabilitation of the Vermont Democratic party, particularly when Vermont Republicanism is willing to be represented in the Senate by George Aiken. In the majority of current political situations, however, the Northern Democratic party plainly offers a more congenial environment for liberal operations.

THE specter of Southern Democracy rises now to cast its shadow. How, it will be asked, can liberals perform their saving labors in a house occupied by the O'Daniels and Rankins, even if they reconcile themselves to Kelly and Company? How can affirmative ideas flourish while the Southern bloc holds its franchise in the party? There is, of course, no answer for the purist. But the reality is that in the formulation of Democratic party policy—in Congress and in the White House—the Northern contingent almost invariably prevails for the simple reason that it is in the North that elections are won or lost. The Southern Democrats, McKellar style, are a national problem, not a Democratic party problem. If they are an inhibiting and often paralyzing force, it is not primarily within the Democratic party but

within the national Congress. Mr. Truman has repeatedly endorsed such proposals as a permanent FEPC and anti-lynching legislation, both in his capacity as President and as head of his party. The legislation is not killed at Democratic headquarters but on Capitol Hill. The strength of the Southern cabal is at its peak when Congress is sufficiently populated with conservative Northern Republicans (and Democrats) to give the Southerners the balance of power. It reaches its lowest ebb when progressivism elects a high proportion of Northern legislators. A third party at this stage would in no way affect the size or outlook of the Southern bloc; it would probably result in a further diminution of liberal representation in the Northern seats by splitting the liberal vote.

One other point. There may be a tendency in some places to exaggerate the significance of the "rebellion" inside Southern Democracy which has produced legislators and officials like Lister Hill, John Sparkman, Ellis Arnall, Claude Pepper, and Jim Folsom. It would be even more misleading, however, to ignore the existence of this contingent or minimize its potential significance. Few states are as intelligently represented in the Senate as is Alabama by Hill and Sparkman. The fact that neither delivered stump-speeches in behalf of FEPC does not alter this judgment; certainly a revolution in the morals of the South will hardly be hastened by exposing such men to premature political execution. Pepper's demure and nimble-footed flirtations with the pro-Communist Left may be easily subject to caricature, but he is unmistakably one of the Senate's most talented performers; and he has rendered a good many Southern-accented Senate orations that might be profitably quoted by his Northern brethren. Without romanticizing any of this group (all of whom faithfully embrace the tenets of segregation in election years) their emergence may well have incalculable impact on national political alignments. For they are gambling their futures on the proposition that a "new South" is in the making, through economic processes that warrant far more study than they usually receive. The

CIO's Southern campaign has not precipitated the surge of unionism that some wistful sponsors forecast; but neither has it met the fierce and bloody resistance that was prophesied with equal certitude. It has settled down into a long-term offensive, and its results may yet prove far-reaching.

Whatever the tempo of the advance, the South is almost certain to be a critical area of political combat in this generation. Looking beyond the immediate contests, it may well turn out that the source of the next major progressive upheaval in the United States lies below the Mason and Dixon line. Certainly this prospect offers ground for more complex and subtle analysis than the glibly repeated suggestion that the Southern Democrats ought to join the Republicans en masse, thereby forming a union of unmitigated reaction and leaving enlightened Northerners the exclusive use of what remains of the Democratic party's facilities.

In the here and now the three-way split—conservative Republican, Northern Democratic, and Southern Democratic—is the prevailing fact of political life. Regardless of later alterations in that diagram, it is difficult to see where a national third party offers any solace for the troubled liberal who feels he has no political bed of his own. His loneliness primarily mirrors his failure to obtain a firm foothold even within Northern Democracy; but this frustration, as heretofore noted, is only partially the result of hostile bosses, backward precinct captains, and archaic party lines. It stems far more directly from the turmoil inside the liberal-labor house.

### III

THE irreconcilable clash between the Communist and anti-Stalinist promoters of the third party is an immediate and clear-cut symptom of the basic rift now prevailing on the liberal-left. While they share a deep distaste for the existing major parties, high prices, and industrial sin, they clash fundamentally on their attitudes on democracy and socialization. Actually, they are two worlds apart. The esoteric controversies between

the *Socialist Call* and the *Daily Worker* are waged on an obscure corner of the total political landscape. But the underlying issues of the conflict touch far wider terrain.

The division is clearly spelled out with the parallel organization of Americans for Democratic Action, rallying-ground for non-Communist liberals who recognized the futility of the "united front" era, and the Progressive Citizens of America, the latest in the long line of fellow-traveling enterprises designed to recruit a new generation of well-intentioned citizens from the plains of Hollywood and the grime of Park Avenue. ADA and PCA are entirely in accord in their opposition to high-cost living, but they could achieve "unity" only by a common and stultifying agreement not to discuss any more fundamental matters. ADA unquestionably represents a far more heterogeneous section of the amorphous thing called "liberal opinion" than does PCA, with its thinly veiled Communist sponsorship. But Mr. Wallace, for the moment at least, strides gallantly at the head of PCA's legions (without benefit of title) and his presence lends distinction to what might otherwise be dismissed as another Communist folly and the delicately refined Communist position on world affairs enunciated by PCA is accepted with only minor modifications by other liberal journals besides the *New Republic*.

The gulf between that view and the outlook of "ADA liberals" can no longer be bridged by ostrich appeals for "unity."

At the root of these differences is the conflict that has steadily deepened since 1917—the attitude towards Russia and its Communist legions abroad. Max Lerner and others have frequently lamented the "obsessive" quality of this issue, pleading for an American reorientation of liberal thought. But the "Russian problem" cannot be rhetorically thrust aside because it creates unhappy discord among men of goodwill; it has become the focal point of men's minds throughout the world. For despite the palpable differences on some levels between the Nazi and Soviet regimes, the challenge to freedom embodied in the expansion of the Russian

police state is no less real than the Nazi threat. When the issue has been joined so dramatically between Social Democracy and Communism in Germany and other European countries, its repercussions could hardly avoid being felt with increasing force here. If the battle is not yet being fought on the surface of American life, the important preliminary skirmishes are being staged in the ranks of liberals.

THE root of the conflict calls for an affirmation or rejection of the traditional liberal attitude toward personal liberty. For two decades many liberals clung to the vision of the "transitory" nature of the Soviet dictatorship. They refused to abandon the conviction that bread and freedom were ultimately inseparables and they devised—with varying degrees of plausibility—explanations for the "peculiarly Russian" course of the Soviet dictatorship. Now, with police state methods being freely exported to Eastern Europe, a new "wave of the future" rationale seems to be developing. The more candid apostles of this credo insist these benighted areas must also endure these grim kingdoms of necessity before they ever glimpse the kingdom of freedom. Pointing to the nationalization programs which have accompanied the Soviet "liberation," they assert that resistance to the cruder and admittedly unpleasant by-products of the Russian technique must inevitably mean resistance to socialization. And so they achieve a new reconciliation to a monolithic despotism, crying that there is no alternative except black reaction. All the apologia once employed by the pro-fascist theoreticians to justify the Nazi onrush are duplicated in this recrudescence of the "Why-die-for-Danzig?" mood, which was crystallized by Mr. Wallace—with a characteristic mixture of innocence and guile—when he left the cabinet.

With that stroke Mr. Wallace drew the line that divides the potential forces of United States liberalism. Setting the stage for a third party (although there remains serious doubt whether he will show up on opening night), he split wide open the pro-

gressive bloc inside and outside the Democratic party. He gave new impetus to the flagging Communist apparatus. He dealt a heavy blow to the harassed European social democrats. He gave new substance to all those doubts about American intentions spread by Soviet manifestoes in Europe.

Where Wallace might wisely have challenged the execution of American policy, he denied its premise—the premise that an unchecked Soviet sweep across Europe imperils the future of freedom and must ultimately produce a catastrophic conflict. Where he might have questioned the sagacity of our moves in Greece and elsewhere, he protested—without a trace of self-consciousness—that Greece was none of our business. Where he might have aimed his fire at the incongruities in Soviet and American actions alike, he chose to train all his guns on America. And so the new isolationism had found its voice.

Wallace's disaffection on the foreign-policy issue destroyed his chance to emerge as the leader of a relatively unified liberal political movement. He is unlikely to recapture that role. The rejection of Wallace's "double-standard" morality in international affairs is probably far more general than its acceptance among those whom he once claimed to lead. But the fortunes of those he left behind were seriously impaired in the battle for supremacy within the Northern Democratic party. Forced to repudiate his frontal assault on the "Truman Doctrine," they found themselves hampered in contesting reactionary possibilities in that doctrine. His pronouncements made it imperative for others to establish that he was not the unchallenged spokesman of American liberalism; his European pilgrimage increased the danger that valid criticism of State Department policy would be confused at home and abroad with an indictment of its sound, larger basis—the containment of Russian power and the democratic construction of Europe.

**I** HAVE explored Wallace's meanderings at length because they underline the absurd and self-defeating character of the third party drive. Our relations with Russia are

almost certain to dominate the political debates of 1948 and—barring swifter stabilization or a crisis of greater magnitude than now seems probable—through 1952. As long as any major segment of the non-Communist Left continues to echo the "wave of the future" line, liberal political activity will be seriously hamstrung. Wallace will win no important laurels, but progressives will be continually diverted from the framing of an affirmative program of their own. If he leads a third party, he will become increasingly dependent on the operations of the Communist machine. The New Dealers whose names command any public notice will almost uniformly shun him; they, in turn, will be required to spend a good deal of their energies isolating the third party enterprise and carefully threading their way between the Wallace wonderland and simple-minded Trumanism.

The political state of the labor movement is an even less cheerful spectacle. Most third party discussion tacitly assumes that it will draw its chief support from organized labor, with strangely little attention to what labor would actually do when presented with a party. There is nothing quite so pathetic as the dim delusion that labor will rise in unison—to the call of Mr. Wallace or any other living "liberal leader." The politicos of labor, except for the small left-wing group, have made it abundantly clear that they are uninterested in a third party venture; and in their present condition it is doubtful whether they would carry many of their own precincts anyway.

Consider some of the more glaring paradoxes:

1. John L. Lewis, the most powerful spokesman of his generation of labor leaders, is intellectually a Hoover Republican whose interest in a third party could only be aroused by making him its standard-bearer. If Mr. Dewey is the GOP nominee Mr. Lewis will in all likelihood support him. On economic issues Lewis finds little common cause with the liberal bloc. Although the PCA piously adopted a resolution urging nationalization of the coal industry, Lewis is as vigorously



opposed to this notion as the most backward barons of coal.

2. CIO president Murray, conducting a patient, phlegmatic campaign to curb Communist influence inside the CIO, has meanwhile ordered his lieutenants to remain aloof from both ADA and PCA, apparently on the theory that he can only reduce Communist activity by simultaneously restraining the anti-Communists. Most of Murray's top non-Communist associates have a deep suspicion of any "outside influences" and are especially disdainful of those they call socialists—meaning anyone who, like Reuther, sees a function for unionism beyond the bargaining table. Murray, a staunch Democrat, has only recently endeavored to exercise a serious degree of authority in the party's councils, where—in combination with the ADA bloc—he could be a commanding spirit.

3. Business unionism remains the dominant philosophy of most of the hierarchs of both the AFL and the Railroad Brotherhoods. Those who dabble in politics—like William L. Hutcheson of the Carpenters, Dan Tobin of the Teamsters, and A. F. Whitney of the Trainmen—could hardly be mistaken for statesmen. Hutcheson is a reactionary Republican who resembles the crudest Pegler tintype of a labor czar; Tobin, a Democratic counterpart of Hutcheson, recently climbed his peak of proletarian virtue when he informed his union that his \$30,000 salary (plus expenses) was adequate. Whitney is a bellicose unreliable who recently marched back into the Truman camp with as loud a flourish as occasioned his earlier departure—and with only faintly visible justification for the noise he created on either occasion.

**T**HERE are many other painful anomalies. The leaders of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers maintain a working alliance with the New York Communists; the Reuther-led Auto Workers Union is paralyzed by the Communist crusade against Reuther, to which the bumbling and scatter-brained R. J. Thomas has dedicated himself; and the elder statesmen of all wings of the labor

movement grow steadily older without any visible receptiveness to fresh ideas.

The provincialism of organized labor is readily explicable. Most of its present leaders have devoted their lifetimes to the establishment of unionism as a going concern in a business society; their accomplishments have been real and enduring. In the process, however, they have generally adopted the values of the business system in which their unions came to life. Their inability to shift their thinking habits is no more surprising than the tenacity with which the rulers of American industry cling to the fetishes and symbols of a simpler time.

The important fact is that "labor"—as a political entity—is largely a product of hopeful radical imagination and dark conservative nightmares. Its campaign against the Taft-Hartley bill—exaggerated and shrill—was an instinctive gesture of self-defense; it did not portend any momentous change in the intellectual climate of trade unionism. Original thought is still restricted to isolated union provinces viewed with mistrust and misgiving by most of the hierarchs who are now devoting themselves to persuading industrialists to continue business-as-usual despite the Taft-Hartley law. There are promising individual figures, some of whose names have been already mentioned here, but the possibility of a widespread insurgency is still remote. Happily many of the perennial chieftains are nearing the age of retirement (although some of them stubbornly refuse to be pensioned) and the appearance of a new generation cannot be indefinitely delayed. Whether their successors are prepared to strike out on new paths may depend to a considerable extent on the degree to which they are exposed to "outside influences" in this transition period.

In any event the stagnation that has afflicted labor since the triumphs of the CIO organizing days is a major clue to the frailty of liberal political effort. It will not be overcome even if AFL-CIO unity is somehow achieved. And so long as the astigmatism of American labor leadership remains a wonder of the Western World, even a maximum de-

gree of unity and awareness among non-Communist progressives could achieve only limited goals.

It may be noted here that this survey has ignored any appraisal of the farm bloc. The answer is that present-day liberal, labor, and radical organizations have only the most precarious rural roots and have almost stubbornly averted their eyes from the farm. The National Farmers Union and the AFL Tenant Farmers Union have performed some heroic labors but it is yet to be shown that their achievements are in any way commensurate with their efforts, or that they can be regarded as political factors outside a handful of scattered areas. Mr. Wallace's hold on the farmers' imagination has never been strong; and since he has become preoccupied with more global stuff his link to the agricultural populace consists almost exclusively of the fact that he is a former Secretary of Agriculture. No other liberal figure, however, appears to excel him in this field. None of the third party projects now contemplated could approach the successes achieved by the La Follette movement in rural territory. Liberals may console themselves with some reminiscences of historic farm revolt, but current forms of American leftism have a distinctly big-city flavor. In any case, one thing is indisputably clear—no latent agrarian progressivism will be stirred by a movement that rests upon or even tolerates the dogma of Soviet infallibility.

#### IV

**T**HE immediate consequences of a national third party undertaking have been suggested earlier. The Wallace group, of course, denies the dangers. Insisting that the American-Russian conflict is "manufactured" rather than real, it cheerfully proclaims a plague on both the Administration and its GOP opposition. Mr. Wallace himself has hinted that four years of Taft might be a salutary interval, presumably paving the way for his own triumphant return. To those who are unable or unwilling to recognize any peril to freedom in the spread of totalitarianism, the third party cry is especially tempting. The

Communists, of course, know better; they know that the triumph of Taft-Brickerism would shatter America's world influence, giving Europe to the Communist Left by default. The Marshall plan, or any reasonable facsimile thereof, would be scuttled at once.

If this administration's attempts to resist Communist expansionism often seem blundering and inadequate to any honest liberal they must look like the highest order of statesmanship in contrast with a Taft-Bricker regime. If the present Congress appears myopic and muddled, the Congress that would be elected in the confusion generated by a third party would make us yearn nostalgically for the enlightened 80th. In that setting the Soviets could not lose in Europe. We should find ourselves—as we did after Munich—confronted by the intolerable alternatives of a holy war (this time with tragically anti-socialist overtones) or capitulation to "the new order."

Yet even if the immediate stakes were deemed less costly, or if it were to be argued that there is a time when liberals must take a calculated risk, the third party adventure could hardly lead elsewhere than into a blind alley. I have not discussed the technical barriers erected by many states to impede such a party; if all other factors were favorable, the obvious answer would be to launch a campaign for repeal of these laws. But the only circumstance in which a new party could prove more than a nuisance squad would be in an era of infinitely more effective liberal organization, basic agreement among liberals themselves as to what they were after, and a spiritual rejuvenation of the labor movement which perhaps only a major economic debacle could effect. If all those conditions were fulfilled it might still be found that the present party machineries could be shaped by progressive will. But the situation described is entirely hypothetical at this juncture.

**W**HETHER we like it or not, non-Communist liberals are compelled to engage now in a campaign of limited objectives. Doctrinaire Marxists may claim this as



new proof of their old thesis: that liberals are always facing choices between lesser evils because they refuse to leave the bed and board of the profit system. But both Communist and anti-Stalinist ideologists have consistently underestimated the resilience of American capitalism—both economically and institutionally. Their time-tables have invariably erred, as have some of their most inflexible tenets. (For example, it was generally fashionable in Marxist circles in the 1930's to suggest that American entrance into another world war insured triumph of fascism at home; yet we proceeded to wage a genuinely global war with only minor and isolated infractions of civil rights.) It seems to me overwhelmingly clear that American progressives must formulate their grand strategy for the next decade on the assumption that the framework of capitalism will survive here, regardless of what happens abroad; that the socialist impulse is neither deep nor incipient in American society and that the gods of "free enterprise" have apparently designated us as their chosen people, at least for the short-range future.

**T**O CONCEDE SO obvious a fact about our country is not to assume (as some would tell us) that all is lost; it may rather be the basis of political wisdom. Having recognized the limits of our goals, we may finally begin to confront the real problems that beset us; and instead of sulking in lonely tents we may produce original formulas based on the hard won lessons of the past and geared to realities instead of indignant lamentations. For many years political scientists on the Left have debated whether a socialist country

could survive in a capitalist world. With capitalism in retreat throughout Europe, it may be more important to discover the conditions under which an "encircled" capitalism will operate here, and what *modus vivendi* can be established between a private enterprise system and the varieties of socialism that may develop abroad. There has been similarly inadequate exploration of the nature of a "mixed economy" and the processes through which piecemeal socialization may be achieved within the confines of the capitalist structure.

A recommendation for Fabian seminars and the development of modern liberal thinking may be far less inspiring a vision than a blueprint for a grand new party stripped of soulless bosses and Southern Bourbons. Yet a degree of intellectual activity and piecemeal practical struggle may point the way to more promising roads than those which liberals and radicals have been traveling since the New Deal came to its dead end in 1937. In the political theater, organizations like ADA must carry the fight for progressive ideas in the major parties, supporting liberal nominees whether Democratic or Republican, bidding in short-run terms for that kind of decisive strength which minority blocs have periodically exercised in Congress, establishing authentic lines of communication with the non-Communist Left of Europe.

None of these actions offers any guarantee that right and reason will finally conquer all in the atomic age. But the way to begin is to begin. It is the third party advocate who is trying to flee from the real problem besetting the divided liberal house.

# THE MYTH OF THE SUPRA-HUMAN JEW

## *The Theological Stigma*

IRVING KRISTOL

**T**HE STIGMA: "Anyone who is not instinctively disgusted by the Synagogue is unworthy of a dog's respect."

So wrote Léon Bloy in 1905 in his book, *Le Salut par les Juifs*—"Salvation Through the Jews," a title taken from Christ's words in the gospel of Saint John: *Salus ex Judaeis est*. A strange sentiment for a book so titled, and one suspects the presence of the spirit of irony. Yet close reading fails to disclose any irony, and serves only to convince the reader that

MANY thinkers have noted that the "historic role of the Jews" as it appears in the Christian tradition, both on a theological and a general cultural level (usually with anti-Semitic overtones), reflects—often in a distorted fashion, it is true—beliefs of the Jews themselves about their own destiny. One central example is the doctrine of the chosenness of Israel. Whether to slough off this dogma has been a moot religious question among Jewish theologians in recent times. Both Orthodoxy and Reform accept the belief today in one form or another; readers of COMMENTARY will recall recent articles by Rabbi Leo S. Baeck ("Why Jews in the World?"—June 1947) and by Will Herberg ("Assimilation in Militant Dress"—July 1947) which presume a historic Jewish destiny in a special relation to the Divine. Among those rejecting divine chosenness are the Reconstructionists, most secular Jewish nationalists, and, of course, most Jews of naturalist tenor with some notable exceptions. The wisdom of continuing to assert the doctrine—at least in the form usually used these days—may well be subject to review in terms of some of the contentions raised here by IRVING KRISTOL. (We invite correspondence on this not entirely theoretical theological question.) Mr. Kristol recently returned from England, where he spent a year. While there, he was staff correspondent for the *New Leader*. Mr. Kristol was born in New York City in 1920, graduated from the College of the City of New York in 1940, and was in the army for two-and-a-half years. With this issue, he joins the staff of COMMENTARY as assistant editor.

Bloy intended to express both these sentiments with the utmost seriousness. How could he?

In her volume of autobiography, *We Have Been Friends Together*, Raïssa Maritain has a long and interesting discussion of Bloy, this disgusted, lonely, poverty-stricken, exalted prophet of Catholicism. "Pilgrim of the Absolute" he called himself, while a contemporary described him as a "cathedral gargoyle who pours down the waters of heaven on the good and on the evil." He is a striking figure, a man of deep feeling, a brilliant rhetorician, a near-saint. Certainly, much can be forgiven him, including ill-tempered statements like the one above; they might be regarded as unclean froth on the surface of a vigorous and profound ocean of religious feeling.

Such a case for forgiveness is presented by Mme. Maritain. Since she herself was born a Jewess, and holds what are known as "liberal" views on the subject of human rights, her pleading is genuine and not open to suspicion. She points out that this simple soul (and he was simple for all that he was profound) had a "medieval horror" of the Jews as a deicide people, and that "he expressed this detestation in terms that were sometimes inadmissible." On the other hand, he attacked in unequivocal words the cheap racist anti-Semitism that was then becoming voluble, and even, in later years, modified his invective so as not to be linked in any way with these latter. To clinch her defense, there are all the wonderfully flattering things that Léon Bloy did say about the Jews. Salvation through the Jews—he meant it, passionately.

Still, after having done justice to Bloy, there remains the problem—the problem of the place of the Jew in the Christian

religion that could provoke such a bewildering duality of emotion; for Bloy's opinions are, in startling clarity, Christian opinions. The Graeco-Roman world disliked the Jews: they were stiff-necked, proud, barbaric, stubborn—almost, a sovereign might say, rebellious. It was an imperial dislike, and certainly no Roman ever had the idea of salvation arising from these people. It was left for the Christians to do that.

What is the Christian conception of the Jew? Jacques Maritain, in his book on anti-Semitism, defines the position of the Jew as follows: "Between Israel and the world, as between the Church and the world, there is a supra-human relation. . . . The bond which unifies Israel is not simply the bond of flesh and blood, or that of an ethico-historical community; it is a sacred and supra-historical bond, of promise and yearning. . . . But since the day when it stumbled, because its leaders chose the world, it is bound, prisoner and victim of the world which it loves, but of which it is not, shall not be, and can never be." (Maritain's italics.)

There is then a mystery about the Jew as there is a mystery about the Apostolic Church. Just as the Church can never be exhaustively defined by a secular vocabulary, so the Jew cannot be explained as, say, the Moslem, the Hindu, or even the Christian can be explained. His being cannot be circumscribed within the area of natural man. He bears a stigma, a theological stigma, that perforce makes him more than human. Or is it less? Or both?

Bloy, in denouncing the scribbling of some contemporary Jew-baiters, wrote: "Formerly the Jews were detested, they were gladly massacred, but they were not scorned as a race. On the contrary, they were respected and feared, and the Church prayed for them." (Bloy's italics.)

"Gladly massacred"—"respected"—"feared." We begin to see the outlines of the stigma.

One more witness, Ernest Renan: "Several times we have called attention to the curious circumstance that the Jews . . . harbour in their bosom two extremes, the struggle between good and evil. . . . The best of

all men have been Jews and the most wicked of all men also have been Jews."

He is high up to the heavens, and he is low to the very depths of hell, but never does the Jew stand with two feet upon earth.

**CURSED AND DIVINE:** Many writers have presented the case of the "demonic" Jew as a product of the Western (i.e., Christian) unconscious. Those who read Joshua Trachtenberg's *The Devil and the Jews* will find ample source material. Medieval Europe saw the Jew as an ally of the Devil, a sly, sub-human, evil creature who incited Christian man, tempted him, damned him. He, the Jew, was at the root of evil, temporal and spiritual, and was attacked as such. He was more than the bystanding scapegoat, the victim of all thwarted desires. He was assumed to be at the source of the frustration itself.

It does not need an expert in psychoanalysis to see that the Devil himself was an ambivalent symbol. He was the imaginative projection of unlawful lust and unsanctioned desire at the same time that the guilt of experiencing these desires was transferred to him, so that it could be fought and chastised at a distance. The Jew, as an ally of the Devil (when he was not that gentleman himself), was a convenient target for the guilty unconscious of the mass of men. Like the Devil, he was unremittingly pursued. The popular belief in the excessive sensuality of the Jews, and those crude medieval drawings of the Devil with his enormous testicles, drawings that aroused gasps of thrilled horror—surely there can be no misunderstanding this. The medieval Christian in pillaging the Jews was purifying himself conveniently and at no expense. On the contrary, his wages were glory and righteousness.

So far, so good. We have here one insight into the perennial sources of anti-Semitism. For, though the Devil may have disappeared from the scene, the psychic mechanism has not changed significantly since the Middle Ages. But it is only half the story. Trachtenberg refers to the moral and dogmatic scru-

ples expressed by the Church against anti-Semitic excesses, and deplores the lack of control of these scruples over the lower clergy and the masses. But might it not be that the beliefs behind these very scruples were themselves at the root of Jew-hatred? The belief that the Jew was in league with the Devil has been investigated ably, but what has not been emphasized enough is the hatred of the Jew that arises from the belief that he is in league with God.

In what sense is the Jew in league with God, that is, the Christian God? That sense is expressly defined in the apologetic literature of the Church. The Jews are witnesses of the Incarnation and Crucifixion, and that is their function until the end of time. They bear living testimony to the truths of Church doctrine. As witnesses, they are doomed to inhabit the earth for eternity, until the day of the Resurrection, when they will be converted to the true faith. Their historical dispersion is the price they pay for this guarantee of deathlessness. The Wandering Jew is the complete symbol: the homeless, ever-living witness to the advent of Christ on earth.

Let us quote Bloy again: "The thought of the Church in every age has been that holiness is inherent in this exceptional, unique and indispensable people who are protected by God, preserved as the apple of his eye in the midst of destruction of so many peoples, for the accomplishment of his ulterior designs."

The Jews, then, do not appear on the historical stage in the same way as ordinary men. They are not born to it, have no natural right to it. They are allowed—nay, enjoined—to settle on the fringe because they are related to the producer, though they are not at all on good terms with him. They exist on divine sufferance, and in their own suffering. The rest of the cast have their suspicions, and their resentment. No one likes to be spied upon, even by agents of the supernatural, of God himself. Especially of God himself. They mutter to themselves and one bright voice calls out:

"Kill them all; God knows his own."

**DEATH OF A GOD:** The Jew is holy and divine. He is also sacrificial in season.

The excuse for persecuting the Jew is the charge of deicide, a charge levelled against him once every year in the Catholic ceremony on Good Friday. But, obviously, this cannot be taken seriously, except in the most trifling technical way. The Jews who participated in the crucifixion must have acted under divine guidance (God is omniscient and omnipotent) as a proxy for Man—all men. Christendom must bear the guilt of this act along with the Jews. But Christendom also bears its own special guilt: that of continually desiring the crucifixion and death of its God.

The Middle Ages reveled in inordinately long and detailed descriptions of the sufferings of Christ on the cross. Trachtenberg remarks: "One cannot escape the impression that an abysmal guilt feeling drove Christendom to remurder Jesus, the personification of its uneasy conscience . . . and to seek release by projecting its guilt upon the Jews." Thus the hatred of the decicide Jews is a sublimation of an instinct toward deicide, a castigation of it.

It is also more. It is an ill-disguised attack upon Christ and Christianity, not merely a sublimation, but also a genuine satisfaction of the desire to kill God. When the Jews are persecuted for having killed Christ, they are also being persecuted for sustaining his memory. For, and we tend to forget this, the blood of Christ was Jewish blood, and conversely, Jewish blood is the blood of Christ. In killing the Jew, the Christian is committing the long desired, the abhorred, deicide.

Léon Bloy: "The Blood shed upon the Cross for the redemption of humankind, as well as that which each day is shed invisibly in the Chalice of the Sacrament of the Altar, is naturally and supernaturally Jewish blood—the immense river of Hebrew blood whose source is in Abraham and whose mouth is the Five Wounds of Christ."

"Kill them all; God knows his own." Can any Christian hear this without shuddering at the naked blasphemy?



The Bible says that the Jews will exist until the end of time. What a burden, and what a temptation—what a provocation—to give the lie to the Holy Book by exterminating them beforehand! With that, who knows what other sacred, irksome sanctions might be annulled? Even original sin perhaps, and man's dolorous existence on earth. What vistas of freedom! Will they never die off?

Pope Innocent III saw the danger, and warned: "The Jews are the living witnesses of the truth of Christianity. The Christian must not exterminate the Jews, for by so doing he would himself lose the knowledge of the law."

Words like these, however, only added fuel to the fire by assuring the Jew-killers that their wildest hopes were well founded. To abrogate the law, to see God dead once and for all, and to have men's secret lusts dance unrestrainedly under the open sky. . . . Will the Jews never die off?

The Jews, too, believe that they are holy and elect, the chosen people. Not as Christian dogma would have them believe it, but after their own fashion, holding fast to some sense of a special election and destiny, and in one way or another to the promise of the Messiah, or a Messianic age, when peace and justice will at last come to them and to the world. The Jews, too, believe by their own religion that they are eternal. The influence of these two dogmas, Christian and Jewish, has its effect upon the rebellious Christian. His revolt is doomed to failure before it has begun, and he comes to recognize this. But this knowledge only goads him on to more desperate measures. To humiliate, to mock, to slaughter, only to find your victim impassive upon a pedestal of persecution, unshakeable—it is enough to drive the best family man into a frenzy of despair.

**THE BURDEN OF GUILT:** With the years, and the centuries, the burden of guilt grows heavier and heavier. For the guilt is cumulative, from generation to generation. The sins of anti-Semitism are like a snowball, rolling downhill, gathering weight and

speed. Its path is irreversible, the damage unatoneable.

To use another metaphor: the original murder leaves behind black and dirty traces that point an accusing finger. They must be erased—which means a further series of murders, and these, in turn, leave new traces. The accusation becomes ever more oppressive. All that can be hoped for is a convulsive miracle of elimination, the destruction of all clues and witnesses without exception.

The anti-Semite is doubly guilty: he is guilty of the Passion of Christ and he is guilty of the Passion of Israel.

A German anti-Semite, Hans Blueher, writing under the Weimar Republic, complained naively: "One of the greatest political assets of the Kingdom of Judah, which accompanies the curse on its blood, is its general capacity to draw a host-nation under the shadow of the curse. This it does by provoking a pogrom and thus bringing guilt upon the hosts."

That, presumably, is what some people mean when they complain of the Machiavelian ethic of a Jew.

Sit in the darkness of the movie house with a Christian audience when pictures of concentration camps are shown upon the screen. There is a silence, a silence that whispers. "Ugh! How horrible!" And then the bent, scrawny, smiling survivors are shown, and the silence whispers: "Are they then truly eternal? It cannot be, for the world's burden of guilt would be too intolerable. Will they never die off?"

Even as they ask, they know the answer. No, they will never die off. In one of his letters, Rainer Maria Rilke wrote: "These people are fruitful even in their eradication." The popular mind amends this to: fruitful *because* of their eradication. It combines the belief in Jewish unnaturalness with the belief in Jewish sensuality. It is a lascivious thought, as must be any that links, contrary to all law and tradition, the sensual with the non-natural.

This grudging, salacious admission of the futility of their revolt does not quiet the Christian rebel. He must gird up his loins

to try again. For as long as the Jew is before him, with his theological stigma, his unnatural accusing presence, the blasphemer cannot have peace.

**THE UNSPOKEN VIRTUE:** There are decent people; probably, under favorable circumstances, they form a majority. These people are civilized; that is, they have a more secure control over their desires, are more sensitive to the consequences of their actions. They partake of the nihilistic, sinful urge of their fellow men, but they never permit it to flower dangerously. Unless, of course, they are unduly provoked. There is always this "unless." "There is a limit to patience—that's going too far—" and so on their apologies run when civilization and decency go by the board and they leap into sacrilege. This is not to say that the leap necessarily takes place. But neither does it say that it necessarily does not.

This decency may be described as *the Christian virtue of not being anti-Semitic*. As a virtue, it is a good thing. But, also as a virtue, it has a lamentable tendency to offer itself for defilement.

We see this virtue in all its strength and weakness in England today. The British are a tolerant, human, and generous people. Their historical record with regard to the question of anti-Semitism is comparatively good. But, at present, they are undergoing a trial of temptation. Their soldiers in Palestine (never mind why they are there!) are being attacked by Jewish terrorists. Naturally, there is resentment and anger at this; that is perfectly human. What is not so pleasant is the form that this resentment takes.

In all organs of opinion and among all classes of people, there is pride in the "forbearance" shown by British troops in Palestine. What this means—and it comes out bluntly in ordinary conversation—is the restraint the British have displayed in not behaving as the Nazis did, or the Cossacks in pre-Revolutionary Russia. There is never any question of treating dissident Arabs, or Burmese, or Malaysians in such a fashion. It

is recognized tacitly that where the Jews are concerned, a special latitude of humanity (or inhumanity, rather) exists. Those who do not take advantage of this full latitude demonstrate "forbearance" and may pat themselves upon the back. The average Briton, proud of his tolerance and democratic institutions, when he reads of the Palestine terrorists, clenches his teeth and murmurs to himself: "They had better watch out." He is not thinking here of an ordinary opponent upon whom he will turn. He means, watch out for anti-Semitism. His self-control is admirable and all that sort of thing, but there are limits—understand?—and beyond those limits lie the ghetto, the pogrom, the concentration camp. Those punishments are linked peculiarly to the Jews. It is the way a Christian, when out of patience, reproves them.

In other words, the British are very much worried that they may be pushed into the horror of anti-Semitism. Let us pray that this special virtue, too, will be possessed of that famous British bull-dog tenacity, and will not snap under the strain.

**THE SECRET BEHIND THE MAN:** Contemporaneously with Léon Bloy lived another great French Catholic—Charles Péguy. The similarities between the two men are striking. Both were poor, proud, sensitive, brilliant; both were outside the mainstream of 20th century thought, and both were scorned because of it. Bloy, possibly, was the "saintlier" of the two, for Péguy had the faculty of getting involved in political and personal squabbles. On the other hand, Péguy was a truly great poet whose full stature is only beginning to be recognized.

Péguy, too, wrote about the Jews. There are some critics who say that his discussion of Israel in *Notre Jeunesse* ("Our Youth") is the finest ever written. He was what is called pro-Semitic, and in Péguy's case this is something of an understatement. Personal events had gone into the formation of this attitude: his activity in the Dreyfus affair, his intense friendship with Bernard Lazare, his poignant, frustrated romance with a Jew-

ish girl. Along with this went a heart whose capacity for love was only equalled by its capacity for contempt. Once Péguy had discovered what he thought to be the truth, he refused to equivocate or compromise. The very scent of anti-Semitism would send him into a rage. In 1912, he broke off his friendship with Georges Sorel because the latter would not support Péguy's efforts to obtain the Prix Goncourt for Julien Benda, a Jew.

For Péguy, the Jews were the carnal voice and temporal body of the Godhead. He wrote of Bernard Lazare: "There was not a trace of feeling, not a thought, not a shade of emotion that was not drawn and ordered by an order fifty centuries old . . . ; a whole race and a whole world on his bowed shoulders; . . . and a heart consumed by fire, the fire of his race, consumed by the fire of his people; the fiery heart, the ardent mind, and the burning coal on the prophetic lips."

Noble sentiments nobly expressed. It would seem almost perverse to cavil at them. Yet—if only he had described a man instead of a myth incarnate. It is so easy for these noble worlds to be handled by a charlatan, like a glittering coin, until the reverse side turns up. Blueher does just this: "Every Jew, irrespective of his intentions or what he thinks are his intentions, is subject to the missionary commands of the Messianic kingdom represented by the reigning Prince of the Diaspora." And he further remarks the Jewish "organic plastic talent for mimicry. It has something to hide."

There is no question of relating the two views. One is not responsible for the other. They are absolutely opposed. But opposed as are the two sides of a coin. Both sides are necessary in order to make the coin legal tender. To speak plainly: so long as the Jew is anything but entirely human, so long as he bears the theological stigma, so long as he is in essence mysterious and extra-human, he can be described as the devil (sub-human) as easily as he can be described as something divine (super-human). When the stigma is enforced, the "truths" of anti-Semitism, far more influential than their contraries, are pre-determined, and no anti-defamation cam-

paign can hope to really touch them. Witness Blueher: "Henry Ford's highly important book on *The International Jew* is largely valid, though there is not a true word in it." If the Jew is outside the realm of the human, the human criteria of evidence, logic, and proof are not relevant to judgments concerning him.

#### THE SECULARIZATION OF THE STIGMA:

Since the French Revolution and Napoleon, the stigma has, among the more "advanced" nations, changed its color. With the decline of religion as a force in men's lives, the Jew is condemned less and less in sacred terms and more and more in profane. The new charge against him is that of "race," that is, of anti-nationalism. The Jew is, to borrow an epithet beloved of Maurras and Chesterton, a "Bedouin" among nations. His self-imposed task is that of national dissolution. He can belong to religion, family, property, but never to any nation. For Jehovah has promised him the empire of the world, and he cannot be placated with anything less. Today, excessive nationalism seeks and finds an ally in anti-Semitism.

This change, while significant, leaves the original form of the stigma unchanged. The Jew is so easily designated as the stranger within the gates because he is, to begin with, the Stranger par excellence, the Stranger on earth itself. All variant and temporary types of anti-Semitism are fed by the deep subterranean wish that discovers the Jew to be—the Devil, a God, a holy witness, a finger of guilt—anything but a man.

This altered coloration of the stigma coincides with a change in the worldly status and ambitions of Israel itself. The literal advent of the Messiah was pushed into the background by the stirring call to liberty, fraternity, equality. The Jew began to explore the possibility of a tolerable existence in this world; he became excited and agitated at the prospect of the rule of reason and good-will among men, a rule which would relieve his depressed condition. With the echoes of the French Revolution ringing in his ears, the Jew began his dedication to the task of social

amelioration. Not all Jews, of course. Many would have nothing less than the Messiah and stayed by their holy books. Others found special reasons for washing their hands of this secular idealism. But the participation of the Jews, with a vigor disproportionate to their numerical influence, in these new movements of the 19th and 20th centuries, has been widely commented upon. So impressed have some observers been that they would have it an essential ingredient of Judaism itself. Jacques Maritain declares that "Israel passionately hopes, waits, yearns for the coming of God on earth, the kingdom of God *here below*. With an eternal will, a supernatural will, it desires justice in time, in nature, and in the cities of man." And: "Israel teaches the world to be discontented and restless as long as the world has not God; it stimulates the movement of history." (Maritain's italics.)

Here, M. Maritain has seized upon a historical truth and polished it until it shines forth as a theological insight, true for eternity. He might assert that many modern Jewish thinkers have insisted upon this secular mission of Israel; he could even point to certain passages in the Talmud that could conceivably support such an interpretation, though many authorities, I believe, will contend that prior to the Enlightenment and Emancipation, the idea of salvation among the Jews was a distinctively other-worldly idea. However, quarrels of historical interpretation, though relevant, are not the issue. Many religions have diverse and far-reaching claims made in their name without these claims being accepted at face value in the popular ideological market. What is noteworthy and exceptional in this particular case is that the Christian world, Protestant as well as Catholic, should be so willing at the present time to accept such claims, made in behalf of an alien religion, in all their literalness. It was not always so. A medieval or Renaissance theologian would have found M. Maritain's dialectics incomprehensible if not heretical.

But why argue? Is not this vision of Israel as the "communion of mundane hope" a

rather flattering one? Perhaps. But, running so close to the ancient stigma, the non-natural historical task of the Jews as a mystic unity, it is a dangerous sort of flattery. If the Jew is of the "communion of mundane hope" he becomes at the same time the object of all wrathful hopelessness. Again we are presented only with the nicer side of the coin. Flip it over, and there is to be read the raucous accusation of "Jew-Bolshevism."

Divine mission or secular mission—the missionary runs his risks. If the Jew is the "stimulating" and "exasperating" agent of progress, he must bear the brunt of the failures of progress, and failures there are sure to be. With each collapse of government and economic order, men will turn in anger and disillusion from their attempts at betterment. Where is an easier object for this anger than the mythical Jew who started the whole affair? "This Jew, this instigating devil who with his persuasiveness tempts men to improve themselves—away with him and back to the good old days [smartly gilded in imagination]. After all, what was good enough for our fathers, etc., etc." The fault does not lie in the lack of foresight, the lack of intelligence, the individual's greed. No, it is transferred to the Jew with his absurd, intolerable, misleading optimism. It is the Jew who is blamed for having led mankind out of the Garden of Eden of the past. He is the Great Deceiver.

This does not mean that the Jew should "play it safe" and abstain from all social movements. Not at all. He has the right and the duty to participate, just as does every citizen, every human being. But when well-meaning lyricists, Christian or Jewish, hold out to him the treasure of his "divine, suffering mission," he should return the gift with as much haste as is consistent with good manners. Unfortunately, there is never an element of choice. The stigma is gratuitously pinned on to the Jew without any previous inquiries as to his wishes.

**THE TRIPLE ANXIETY.** The Jew, because of this theological stigma, bears the anxieties generated by the Christian religion. Because



of the stigma in its secularized form, he bears most acutely the anxieties, the contingencies, of his epoch. Thus the anxieties of both Christian man and secular man descend upon him. It is not surprising, then, that the anxieties of *man himself*, as a conditioned, limited, imperfect being, should also seek him out. By a supreme analogy, the Jew's fate is man's fate, and is seen as such in the world's eye. The Jew is the eternal embodiment and symbol of man as victim, man suffering, man beaten down by nature and the world. And it is inevitable for a man to hate his own suffering and his fate when he sees it mirrored in the suffering and the fate of another.

Rilke saw this point: "The mobility and nomadism of man's inner center, its independence . . . *this spiritual vagrancy* came into the world through the fortunes of the Jews." (Rilke's italics). This vagrancy promotes the despair of man who sees his life as a journey toward death and who sees in his death a lifetime's work. His self-hatred becomes Jew-hatred. The Jew is made over into the looking-glass of humanity. Men warp the glass in every possible way so that their image shall come out over-large and handsome. But it is a perverse glass, perverse as fate itself, and occasionally men see themselves diminish furiously, threaten to disappear. Then they smash the glass.

**THE FINAL SHAME?** There is a tendency among some Jewish thinkers to accept the stigma and glorify in it. (For example, Will Herberg's article "From Marxism to Judaism" in the January COMMENTARY.)

That is understandable—one does the best with what one has. It is not a solution that will commend itself to those who are not possessed of a martyr complex, and besides (as Harold Rosenberg brilliantly pointed out) it means grafting an essentially foreign ideology on to the body of Jewish religious thought.

It is time, I think, that a distinction is drawn between that concept of the "chosen people" which plays a unique role in Jewish theology—as an affirmation of the loving contract between God and man—and the more modern interpretations that are based, in one form or another, directly or by reaction, upon the stigma of the supra-natural Jew. Judaism is neither a divinely intoxicated form of liberalism nor an intellectual's masochistic apologia for the historical sufferings and present alienation of the Jews. It is a religion—and a religion of quite ordinary men.

Now, after the efficient massacre of European Jewry, the stigma becomes more and more intolerable. One reason why so many Jews feel a secret pride in the terroristic acts in Palestine (the practical merits and demerits of these acts are something else again) is because they constitute a debasement, a debasement to the human. Is not that, in a way, the final shame?

D. H. Lawrence, a strong anti-Semite in his own right, wrote: "And it will be left for the Jews to utter the final and great death-cry of this epoch: the Christians are not reduced sufficiently." So they will, if the stigma, in all its variants, is not obliterated. Or is it already too late, and did the cry pass unheard in the general commotion?

## FIRST LOVE

A Story

ISAAK BABEL

**W**HEN I was ten years old I fell in love with a woman—Galina. Her last name was Rubtsov. Her husband, an officer, went off to the Russo-Japanese War and returned in October, 1905. He brought many trunks back with him. The trunks, weighing altogether twelve hundred pounds, contained Chinese souvenirs: screens, precious weapons. Kuzma, the porter, used to tell us that Rubtsov had bought all these things with money he had pilfered while serving in the engineer corps of the Manchurian Army. The Rubtsovs were happy, so it was hard for people not to gossip about them. Their house leaned against our property, the glass veranda jutting over our grounds, but my father did not make a fuss about it. The elder Rubtsov, who was a tax collector, had a reputation in our town for being a fair-minded man; he was friendly with the Jews. When the officer, the old man's son, returned from the war, we could see how happily he and his wife lived together.

Galina would hold her husband's hand all day long. She stared at him incessantly, for she had not seen him in a year and a half. But her gaze frightened me—I turned away and shivered. In her ecstatic eyes I saw that

ISAAK BABEL was born in Odessa in 1894. His story "The Awakening" (COMMENTARY, February 1947) describes his early revolt against the prevailing ghetto life of the Jews. In the same issue there was a critical estimate of his work by Raymond Rosenthal. Babel took an active part in the Russian Revolution, and his novel *Red Cavalry* is considered one of the finest creative works of that epoch. In more recent years he has stopped writing entirely, and since 1936 Babel's name has disappeared from all Soviet publications. According to one rumor, he was jailed in 1941, and there died of typhus. This story was translated by ESTHER and JOSEPH RIWKIN.

obscure and shameful life of all people on earth. I longed to drop off to sleep in a rare dream, to forget this life that stretched beyond all my fantasy. Galina would glide through the rooms with a braid down her back, in elegant red boots and a Chinese robe. Under the lace of her deep-cut slip one could see the swelling of her white breasts, pressed together, and the gash between them, and on her robe were embroidered rosy silk dragons, birds and hollowed-out trees.

The whole day long she sauntered about with a meaningless smile on her moist lips, brushing against the trunks, not yet unpacked, and the gymnastic rope-ladders strewn over the floor. Galina would scratch herself, pull the robe above her knee, and say to her husband: "Kiss your baby." The officer bent his long legs in their narrow dragoon's trousers, the smooth, taut leather boots with spurs and, crawling across the dirty floor on his knees, he would smile and kiss the hurt flesh, just where a little bulge rose above the garter.

I saw these kisses from my window. They made me suffer. Unbounded fantasies tormented me—but what's the use of speaking about it? The love and jealousy of a ten-year-old boy is the same in all ways as the love and jealousy of a mature man, only such feelings are more ardent, mysterious, and feverish in children. I did not go near the window and avoided Galina for two weeks—until an event brought us together.

**I**T was the pogrom against the Jews which broke out in 1905 in Nicolayev and other towns where Jews were permitted to live. A mob of hired murderers plundered my father's store and killed my grandfather Shoyl. All this happened while I was gone.

That sad morning I had bought some doves from the hunter Ivan Nikodimytch. Five years of the ten I had lived, I had dreamed with my whole soul about doves. But when I finally bought them, the crippled Macarenko smashed them against my temples. Then Kuzma found me and brought me to Rubtsov's. On Rubtsov's gate a cross was chalked. Nobody molested them and they hid my parents in their house. Kuzma led me to the glass veranda. My mother and Galina were sitting there, in the green rotunda.

"Now we must wash," Galina said. "We must wash, my little rabbi. Our face is covered with feathers, and the feathers are bloody."

She embraced me, guiding me along a hallway pungent with odor. My head leaned against her hip—her hip that moved and breathed. We got to the kitchen and Galina put my head under the water-tap. A large goose was frying on the tile stove; glowing pots and pans hung on the wall, and next to them, in the cook's corner, was Tsar Nicolay, decorated with paper flowers. Galina washed off the last smear of the dove which stuck to my cheeks. "You'll look like a bridegroom now, my sweet boy," Galina said, after kissing my mouth with her full lips and turning away.

"My little rabbi," she said unexpectedly, "your dad has troubles, you see. He roams the streets all day long. Call your dad home."

I saw through the window the empty streets under the great sky, and my red-headed father walking on the pavement. He walked bare-headed, his soft red hair fluttering, his paper shirt-front askew and fastened to the wrong buttons. Vlasov, a drunken workman, dressed in a soldier's cotton rags, stubbornly pursued him.

"Babel," Vlasov was saying in an affectionate, hoarse voice, "we don't need freedom so that the Jews can get hold of business. . . . Give enlightenment to the worker for his toil, for this awful greatness. . . . You must give it to him, my friend, do you hear me, give it to him!"

The workman was begging my father for

some unknown gift, grabbing his arm. Flashes of pure drunken inspiration and gloomy sleepiness appeared on his face interchangeably. "We should live like the Molokan sect," he mumbled, swaying on his weak legs. "We should live like the Molokans, but without that old orthodox God. Only the Jews get anything from him, nobody else does."

Vlasov yelled in wild desperation against that old orthodox God who took pity only on the Jews. Vlasov bellowed, stumbled, and tried to catch hold of his fabulous God, but at that moment a Cossack patrol rode by, barring his way. An officer, with stripes on his trousers and a parade belt of silver, rode in front of the patrol, a high peaked cap set stiffly on his head. The officer rode slowly and did not look to the side. He was riding as though through a mountain pass where one can look only ahead.

"Captain," my father mumbled when the Cossack came abreast of him. "Captain," my father said, grasping his head with his hands and kneeling in the mud.

"Do what I can," the officer answered, still looking straight ahead, and raising his hand in its lemon-colored chamois glove to the peak of his cap.

Right in front of them, at the corner of Fisk Street, the mob looted and demolished our store, threw out boxes filled with nails, machines, and my new portrait in the uniform of my school.

"Look," my father said, still on his knees, "they destroy everything I have. Captain, why is it?"

"At your service," the officer murmured, and again put the lemon glove to his cap. He tugged at the reins but his horse did not move. My father crawled in front of the horse on his knees, rubbed against its short, sturdy, tousled legs and its broad, patient, hairy nose.

"At your service," the officer repeated, pulled on his reins and rode off, the Cossacks following him. They sat unmoved in their high saddles riding through their imaginary mountain pass, and disappeared into Church Street.

Galina again gently motioned me to the window.

"Call father home," she said. "He hasn't had anything to eat since morning."

I leaned out of the window.

"Papa," I said.

My father turned around when he heard my voice.

"My little son," he stuttered in immeasurable tenderness, trembling with love for me.

TOGETHER we went to Rubtsov's veranda where my mother was lying on a couch in the green rotunda. Near her were scattered dumbbells and the gymnastic apparatus.

"That cursed money," my mother cried at us. "You gave up everything for it. Human life, the children, and even our wretched little happiness. . . . Cursed money!" she cried out in a deep, coarse, unnatural voice. She winced and fell silent.

Then, in the silence, my hiccoughs were heard. I was standing near the wall with my cap pulled down over my forehead and I could not stop the hiccoughs.

"What a shame, my sweet boy," Galina said with her mocking smile, flipping me with her stiff robe. She went to the window in her red boots and began to hang Chinese curtains on the ornate molding. Her bare arms were drowned in silk, her braid was alive, swinging down over her hips. Enchanted, I stared at her.

I was a studious, neurotic boy and I looked at her as at a distant scene, glaringly lighted. Then I imagined that I was Myron, the son of the coal man who had his shop at our corner. I imagined myself to be a member of the Jewish Defense Corps and, like Myron, I am wearing torn shoes and a rope holds up my pants. On my shoulder an antiquated rifle hangs from a green cord. I am kneeling near the old wooden fence and shooting at the murderers. Behind the fence an empty lot stretches, heaps of dusty coal lie there. The discarded rifle shoots badly. The murderers have beards and white teeth, they approach steadily. I sense the proud feeling of coming death, and in the skies, in the

world's blueness, I see Galina. I see a garret window, cut out in the wall of a gigantic house built of myriads of bricks. This purple house weighs heavily over the alley on which the grey earth is loosely stamped. In the highest garret window Galina is standing, flushed with wintry, heartless joy, like a rich girl in a skating rink. From the garret window out of reach she smiles mockingly. Her husband, a half-dressed officer, is standing behind her, kissing her neck.

Trying to stop my hiccoughs, I imagined all this so that I might love Galina with a bitterer, warmer, more hopeless love—perhaps because a ten-year-old boy has no way to measure his suffering. Oh, foolish fantasies, help me to forget the death of the doves, and Shoyl's death!

Maybe I would have forgotten these murders, if Kuzma had not come to the veranda with the repulsive Aba, sexton of the synagogue. It was twilight when they arrived. On the veranda a poor lamp, somehow bent, was burning—a blinking flame, the flickering companion of unhappiness.

"I put the shroud on grandfather," Kuzma said as he entered. "He's beautiful now, lying there, and I brought the sexton along. Let him gab a bit over the dead."

Kuzma pointed to the bored sexton Aba.

"Let him squeak," Kuzma, the porter, said amiably. "If the sexton gets his belly full, he'll pester God all night long."

Kuzma was standing on the threshold, with his friendly, broken nose twisted in all directions, and he wanted to tell us with as much feeling as he could how he had bound the dead man's chin. But my father interrupted old Kuzma.

"Please, Reb Aba," my father said, "pray for the deceased. I will pay you."

"I'm terribly frightened you won't pay," answered Aba in his bored voice and placed his bearded, weary face on the table. "I'm afraid you'll take my rouble and go away with it to Argentina, to Buenos Aires. You'll open a wholesale business on my rouble . . . a wholesale business," said Aba, chewing with his disdainful lips and dragging the newspaper across the table to him. In the



paper a story was printed about the Tsar's manifesto of October 17, about the proclamation of freedom.

"... Citizens of free Russia," Aba read syllable by syllable, chewing a mouthful of his beard, "Citizens of free Russia, be greeted this day of the holy Resurrection. . . ."

THE OLD sexton held the swaying newspaper sidewise. He read drowsily in his sing-song voice and strangely accentuated the unfamiliar Russian words. Aba's accent resembled the bewilderment of an African Negro who has just come to a Russian port from his native land. It even made my mother laugh.

"I commit a sin," she exclaimed, leaning forward from her rotunda, "I am laughing, Aba. . . . You'd better tell me how you feel and how your family is."

"Ask me something else," growled Aba without easing the grip of his teeth on his beard, and continued to read the newspaper.

"Ask him something else," said my father, echoing Aba's words, and then stepped to the center of the room. His eyes, smiling to us in tears, suddenly turned in their sockets, and focused on a point unseen by us.

"Oh, Shoyl," my father said in a false voice, all prepared to burst into a shout.

My father's face, contorted by convulsions, split open in victory, and he got ready to scream as Jewish women scream at funerals, or old women in Morocco, women struck by misfortune. We saw that he would yell appallingly, and my mother warned us.

"Manus," she shouted, her hair dishevelled in an instant, tearing at his chest. "Look how sick our boy is. Why don't you hear his hiccoughs? Why not, Manus?"

My father grew still. His glazed eyes filled with tears.

"Rachel," he said fearfully, "I can't tell you how sad I am for Shoyl."

He went to the kitchen and came back with a glass of water.

"Have some water," Aba said, coming up to me. "Drink this water. It will help you as much as candles help the dead."

He was right. The water did not help me. My hiccoughs increased. A howl escaped from my throat. A swelling, pleasant to touch, rose on my neck. It was alive, it expanded, spread on my throat and bulged over my collar. Inside the swelling bubbled my torn and gasping breath. It bubbled like boiling water. And when, toward night, I was no longer just the frail boy I had always been, but a writhing mass, rolling in my green vomit, my mother covered herself with a shawl and, growing taller and straighter, she approached the death-frightened Galina.

"Dear Galina," my mother said in a sonorous, strong tone. "How we disturb you and your whole family. I am so ashamed, dear Galina."

Her cheeks burning, mother pushed Galina toward the door. Then she hurried to me and stuffed my mouth with her shawl to muffle my groans.

"Try to stand it," my mother whispered. "Try to stand it, my dear little Babel, for your mother's sake."

Even if it had been possible to endure, I would not have done it, for I no longer felt any shame. I tossed on the bed, fell to the floor, and did not take my eyes off Galina. I revelled in my detestable power over her big, wonderful body. Fear made her stagger, distorted her features. I roared in her face to prolong my power over her, and crying, triumphing, exhausted with the last strength of love, I vomited near her the green water that came from my heart.

## A PARENT LOOKS AT JEWISH EDUCATION

### *The Younger Generation Is Only Half the Problem*

L. H. GRUNEBAUM

**A**S A father I should be pleased with our religious school, and as a member of the Board of Education of our Reform temple I should be proud of it.

Every week, from October to May, three hundred children give up their Sunday morning's leisure to a modern program of Jewish activities directed by a modern Jewish educator. Bible stories are not merely told, they are acted out. Crayons, drawing, and songbooks are tools of learning, as in other progressive schools. Holidays occasion plays, assemblies, festivals. In the upper grades, Jewish history, Jewish contributions to civilization, Jewish activities and social problems in America receive attention. These various strands of learning are finally woven together by the rabbi in preparation for confirmation, when the adolescents face the problems of religion and Jewish ethics.

Surely such a school can flourish only because the members of our community are proud of their Jewishness and vitally interested in their temple. But visit the synagogue on any Friday evening—which is the only Sabbath service. The temple is filled with—perhaps thirty people! The same is true on Sukkoth, Purim, Pesach, Hanukkah, all those holidays so rich in activity and meaning for our children. The temple is filled

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only twice a year, on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, when, in fact, it overflows.

Is ours an exceptional congregation? Not if we are to judge by the constant lamentations, such as this one from a national periodical: "Empty synagogues are not functioning either for adult Jews or for pupils of schools; Sabbath and festival life are almost nonexistent in the Jewish community."

**J**EWISH educators are well aware of the extraordinary discrepancy between what so many parents consider necessary for the education of their children and what they consider necessary for themselves. Indeed, they use the fact as one of their most impressive arguments for the vital necessity of Jewish education. With Jewish religion failing in the home, the Jewish school now becomes the key to the survival of Judaism. "It is an indisputable fact that second and third generation American Jews—increasingly the largest proportion of the Jewish child population—are devoid of a home background of Jewish experience," one writer states. Accordingly, it devolves on the educator to supply the "Jewish school of tomorrow," which will create "an atmosphere of Jewish living" for the child who cannot take on Jewishness "through the subtle influences of the home or of the general community environment."

But since religiously indifferent parents cannot be trusted to get reluctant youngsters out of bed on Sunday morning just for religion's sake, educators have found a second, and stronger, argument. Do we not all know that religion has important therapeutic value? What better tonic for mental anguish in an unhappy world? Are not Jewish children doubly endangered, exposed as they are, not only to all the perplexities of the 20th century, but also to the germs of the inferiority

complexes that breed in an antagonistic world? Does not social rejection cause heart-ache in the sensitive youngster and brashness in his tougher brother?

Here American Jewish education has found its prime objective. It seeks to place the child in a healthy and happy Jewish atmosphere, to show him the greatness of his people and its contribution to civilization; it aims, by letting him participate in beautiful customs and holidays, to teach him to take delight in his Jewishness. Let us refrain from inflicting Hebrew drill and dull, old-fashioned learning upon children, say the modern Jewish educators; the job is to make the child, faced with the problems of a minority group, into a healthy, integrated human being, by giving him inner dignity and spiritual assurance.

These child-centered arguments are basically—and quite consciously—different from the traditional Jewish educational aim. The yeshivot, Talmud Torah schools, and other organizations of intensive Jewish education strive for another goal: "If we . . . are actually concerned with the essence of the Jewish people, we must bequeath to them [the coming generation] our ancestral Judaism, in which the faith of Israel and the Torah of Israel have ever been the basic foundations, real and indivisible. The function of Jewish education is to raise a generation of Jews, in other words, to provide them with that spiritual content which makes a Jew out of a human being." As compared with this, most modern parents bother little about "ancestral Judaism"; they try to bring up well-informed, untroubled boys and girls, informed about their Jewishness and adjusted to it.

Does this explain the riddle of the full Sunday school and the empty synagogue? Only in part, in my opinion.

**W**HAT makes those lacking a robust faith, and with at best only a mild predilection for things Jewish, send their children to Jewish schools at all?

If I look around at the members of my family and at my Jewish neighbors, the parents of my children's friends, it seems to

me that perhaps our strongest motivation is the "good Jewishness" of the immediately previous generations. Our generation is a transitional one in a very special sense. Mostly irreligious ourselves, we are the children or at least the grandchildren of devout people. The first and second generation descendants of East European Jews know of a Jewish existence in which civic and religious cultural life were practically identical. And while many, now grown up, have turned their backs entirely on what seems to them a medieval ghetto civilization, others, although thoroughly modernized, still derive satisfaction from celebrating the two great holidays and having their children receive a religious education. The last generation of more "assimilated" Jews is interested in its religion to a greater extent than is usually recognized. Though they live in a Gentile world, Judaism remains a life stream for them, and out of a kind of ancestral piety their children try to honor their parents' memory by reverentially handing on the tradition.

So it is that many Jewish parents, matured in a naturalistic and sceptical age, still feel a void in their family life. They remember with emotion the lighting of the Sabbath candles and the blessings over the bread, the wine, and the children, and they wish for the festive drama of the Seder table. They have the hope that their children, by participating at school in the beauty of the Jewish holidays, may grow up to celebrate these holidays again in family circles of their own, thus maintaining continuity with a great past.

With other parents, the recently intensified interest in Jewish welfare and political and social problems is the spark. Men and women engrossed in Federation work, Zionism, or the United Jewish Appeal campaigns wish their children to know the meaning of the work their elders are engaged in. Today such activities have become the preoccupations not merely of the "professional" Jew but, in one way or another, of almost every one of us. Concern with the Jewish tragedy in Europe has been accompanied by a deep-

ened concern with anti-Semitism and race hatred here in America. Small wonder that Jews now wish their children to be better informed about their Jewishness and about Jewish problems, more conscious of a Jewish kinship, more protected inwardly from the impact of prejudice.

Such are the needs that have shaped the rather pragmatic approach to Jewish education of recent years, of which the therapeutic argument of the professional educators may be considered one aspect—though increasingly a central one. Its spirit is well summed up in the report of the Commission on New Approaches to American Jewish Education. "We soon agreed that there was great need for our children to be taught the fundamentals of the heritage which, willingly or unwillingly, was theirs; since, being Jews (by the age-old definition that the world would so regard them), it was better for them to be Jews and like it than to be Jews only by social compulsion."

In addition, there is, I believe, a motive which is not sufficiently recognized by the Jewish educator that may well be playing an increasing role in the revival of religious education—nothing less than a rising interest in religion itself. When so many Jewish parents who were themselves brought up as free-thinking "non-sectarians" today send their children to religious school, this cannot be merely a secular reaction to the contemporary social scene. There has also been a change in the spiritual climate. A search for new universals is on; intellectuals revive old beliefs and seek new faiths to forestall social collapse and ease inner personal stress. When Existentialism and medieval Christianity are featured in *Life*, something is happening.

In this atmosphere it is natural that "heathen" Jews, feeling their own dissatisfaction, should wonder again about the oldest and purest monotheism, and be prompted to curiosity and inquiry about their own religious tradition.

Undeniably, the generation of convinced agnostics that succeeded the pious Jews before them has lost its self-confidence. A new kind of doubting Jew has arisen, doubting

religion, but doubting scepticism as well. The result is that many feel that even for purely intellectual reasons it "may be better" to give one's child religious education, and let him afterwards choose his own position and affiliation. And indeed some such thinking often reveals itself when the parents explain why they too—"mind you, not that we're religious,"—have "given in" and are exposing their children to a religious education.

SO FAR we have not asked the most important question. What effect, actually, does the Sunday school have, not on ourselves, but on our *children*? Do they really learn the Jewish way of life and become attached to it?

The fact is that the youngsters are indifferent—and their parents dissatisfied. The children—especially as they grow older—ask about Sunday school what the unmathematical child asks about mathematics: what for? To be sure, the younger grades are generally happy if the play program is good. Some of the children in high school, too, are interested—usually a small minority from homes with a real allegiance to the Jewish group or the Jewish way of life, or others inspired by the personality of an unusual teacher or rabbi. But, in general, the older group is quite apathetic; it feels a negativism that frequently increases after confirmation.

Of course, it may be that the schooling is not good enough or intensive enough. Still, our local religious school is professionally considered as good as effort can organize and money can buy; and if we count the total amount of time of *the child's life* that the religious school gets, our school ranks not with the average or the typical, but with the best. Although we may have the child for fewer hours each week than some schools, we keep him for more years. Does not the answer lie else here?

Hopeful parents trying to *revive* the Jewish tradition must realize that, despite the efforts of Hebraists, Reconstructionists, and Jewish nationalists, young people are no museum in which an old religious civiliza-



tion, however glorious, can be preserved and continued. Especially when what is taught at school is so at odds with what is heard at home.

Play and entertaining stories satisfy the young child, but the high-school adolescent keeps interested only if what he learns is made *relevant* to his present life and future career. But once the adolescent begins to ask searching questions, the re-acquired Jewishness of his parents melts under the rays of modernism and scepticism, amid the barrenness of contemporary religious life and feeling, and the utter inability of our well-to-do, middle-class congregations to give reality to "the ideals of prophetic Judaism" in personal or community action. Should it be any wonder that to such children the relevance of religious education seems a deep mystery?

Not that they lack a vital concern with ethical as well as with metaphysical problems. They hotly debate the ethics of the honor system, the justice of punishments in school and at home, the many difficult problems of behavior that arise from friendships of teen-age boys and girls, even the problems of economics and of minority groups. But at Sunday school, the fine and universal precepts of the Bible never touch reality specifically, lack concrete application, and hence have little impact or meaning.

Thoughtful young people are also eager to understand such basic issues as mankind's role in the whole scheme of the universe: "Whence are we and why are we? Of what scene the actors or spectators?" But Judaism, like the other religions, continues blithely to dodge these issues or offers specious answers, and so most laymen have lost religious certainty. Add to this the prevailing feeling among parents that socialized prayer and holiday observance stand in no relation to the real ethical problems of our lives as individuals and citizens, and youth's disillusionment is inevitable. How can modern parents ask religion to solve the deeper spiritual questionings of their children when they make it only too obvious that they do not look to it to solve their own?

THIS is, of course, not an exclusively Jewish problem. Recently, a group of educators surveyed our colleges and confessed: "The doctrine, the authority, and the certainty [of traditional religious faith] are all now gone or going." Reform Judaism has dropped its old fighting creed, which made of its earlier rabbis theological crusaders. With it, Reform Judaism has also dropped the religious explanation of the mysteries of the universe and of the enigmas of life: its greatness, heroism, and love, and its "undeserved suffering, unpunished injustice, and hopeless stupidity." What is left is a bland idealism.

Our temples abhor indoctrination, controversy, political choice, partisanship. They favor harmony and unity. But harmony and unity must be harmony and unity about and in something. We all agree in condemning murder and revenge and in supporting racial equality—at least in theory and in peacetime and up North. But these broad imperatives have no meaning except in concrete social and political situations—which is just where our temples find it expedient to take refuge in hazy generalities that do not satisfy the impatience of youth for 'straight answers.

Modern Jewish education avoids the problem by eliminating all specifically religious issues in the high school. It limits itself to the tribal material, to the history and role of Jews in America, and to the present status and problems of the Jewish communities all over the world. While children of pre-confirmation age do not have the background to appreciate the relevance of Jewish history and of Jewish political and social problems to their own personal lives in America, high-school seniors and college students find their deeper questioning ignored. In any case, the canvas of Jewish learning has to be covered so thinly in the weekly lesson that the smattering of knowledge acquired remains too superficial to serve any serious later purpose.

So even the therapeutic aim of the religious school is missed. Two or three hours of weekly Sunday school cannot afford "inner support" to the child who comes from a modern home that lacks devotional life, nor

can it provide "a Judaism that will help to dignify and give meaning to his life," a Jewishness that "can become a source of strength and wisdom instead of being considered a burden."

From the proponents of an intensive Jewish education embracing the totality or at least a major portion of the child's life, this pessimistic judgment will evoke an emphatic "I told you so." How do you reformers, with your "denatured approach to all human problems," expect to make something out of nothing?

But is it not a fact that what is offered in Orthodox, Conservative, and parochial education is even further from solving the problem of Jewish youth, accentuating as it does the difficulties of their relations as Americans to other young Americans? It is well known that children enrolled in Conservative schools are all too anxious to join neighboring Reform schools. The Conservative school blames this trend on snobbery—a possibly comforting but superficial explanation.

The fact is that while the idea of a renaissance of Judaism as "a complex living reality" in a multi-cultural American society is a fascinating and romantic wish-dream, it runs counter to the realistic instinct of most young Jews, who seek the quickest cultural and social amalgamation with progressive American culture. We may indulge in regrets over this modernity, but would it not be more constructive to face the facts? Instead of basing Jewish education on the yearning for a by-gone cultural pattern, we would do better to build it on the faith which most young people cherish—even if they pretend a callous cynicism—the faith in a better world, and in the love they feel for an equalitarian America.

**M**EANWHILE Jewish schools continue to grow. More and more parents feel compelled to send their children and to take an interest themselves. More and more money goes into educational work. Educators and laymen debate the merits of community approach, congregational affiliation, independent schools, Sunday schools, weekday schools,

all-day schools, released time, and of Hebrew and Yiddish and English. The American Jewish community, now the largest Jewish group in the world, seems to have awakened to its responsibilities. Jewish education is developing its own organizations, its own status separate from the rabbinate, and its own full-time professional teachers, full of hope and missionary zeal.

What of the future? Will the present revived interest in religion give a more substantial life to the mere progressive-school *liveliness* of the schools?

Will the intellectual influence of the yeshivot and other intensive centers of Jewish education provide the content that American Jewry formerly received from European Jewish centers? Will the problem be solved by the fifteen-million-dollar campaign of Conservative Jewry to strengthen its institutions of learning, establish new religious schools, and propagate the faith? Granted the funds, can enough devoted young American Jews be found who are trained in modern educational methods and at the same time possessed of enthusiasm for Judaism?

Will anti-Semitism in America grow or decline? If it grows, will it not automatically force Jews into closer solidarity, strengthen their will to cultural survival? If it lessens, will it not weaken the pragmatic impulse to Jewish education?

I am neither a prophet nor an educational expert—merely a father, and by no means a discouraged one. Looking at our community and its children, I do not find myself in the alarmist frame of mind which inspires blue-printed reconstruction schemes aimed at putting ancient custom in modern dress—"solutions" that might well prove worse than the disease. I am not convinced that the Jewish teen-agers or college students I see come and go through our house, or indeed my own children, are a lost generation. "Poor Jews" by the traditional standard, they seem to my perhaps myopic eyes splendid people. We have every reason to despair if we value Jewish cultural tradition above everything else. We have every reason to be confident if we value humanity.

Nor is this surprising. It confirms what history and personal experience tell us: morality and decency and character, "the acceptance of high ends by mind and will," do not seem dependent to any great degree upon religious orthodoxy. Though we live in a secular, scientific age devoid of firm religious beliefs and lacking any definite or uniform world view, children seem still to follow the time-honored rules that guided us when we were a more pious people.

Western humanity seems to have absorbed what was ethically and religiously great in the Jewish message. The "cultural amalgam" so greatly feared by the protagonists of a special Jewish religious or nationalist culture is on the way to becoming the universal possession of democratic peoples—if not in practice, at least in theory. Our public education is neutral as far as religion is concerned, but it offers a humanitarian, democratic, spiritual education, however inadequate. If we had to rely only on the little supplementary Jewish education on Sunday mornings or weekday afternoons to produce sensitive and intelligent young people, we should be in a bad way. Luckily this is not the case. Just as the world has absorbed and preserves some of what was great in ancient civilization without a special Greek Sunday school education, so a special Jewish Sunday school is not necessary to keep the Ten Commandments and monotheism before the world.

As to the specific disabilities that our children suffer as Jews, we need only heed the lesson of modern sex education: to tell the truth objectively and unemotionally at each stage of the child's development. As one educator states it, our children must have "the knowledge that would help them to think clearly and react constructively. The Jewish child is both an American and a Jew. He cannot be in conflict about either and be whole. Neither integration nor happiness nor self-respect is possible if he cannot accept his own origin." His origin is a natural condition, nothing to be proud of as compared to other children, but nothing to be ashamed of either.

A Jewish child can no more escape the obvious difficulties of his minority status than a normal adolescent can escape the emotional difficulties of puberty, even through the most understanding parental or school sex education. Of course, the knowledge acquired on Sunday morning, whether of Biblical history, old festivals, or Jewish history, will help him. But more important are parents who are not neurotic about the "glory" or "calamity" of their Jewishness and who easily and naturally assist their children in any situation, taking in their stride whatever unfortunate conflicts may arise. The panicky discussions of anti-Semitism one hears in so many Jewish homes these days should never be permitted in the presence of children—even when one's whole family has had to flee from Europe or was destroyed by Hitler.

Normal children, by and large, are upright, democratic human beings by the time they reach their early teens. At this stage, when the child becomes interested in the problems of society and begins to look at the newspaper headlines, he might go to a school or youth group that deals with Jewish problems and some of the still viable features of Jewish tradition—the Prophets, for instance. (Young children should read Bible stories as they read other great fairy tales and mythological works.) This may not serve the purpose of developing strong loyalties in the children as members of a separate Jewish group. But it will serve to make them acquainted with their ancestry and their own special problems. In addition, the group should devote time to the everyday real problems that the children are puzzled about and interested in. Of course, this group work should not end with the fourteenth year, but should go on to an age level more aware of social, ethical, and political problems. (Perhaps if our schools didn't start as early as they do, we could avoid the present situation, when so many children leave by the time they are twelve or fourteen.)

In this educational scheme, the school is of secondary importance compared with the *clarity and honesty of the parents' position.*

Children can be told and made to understand that their parents, while not "believing" Jews, do belong to and are part of the Jewish historic community in general and the Jewish community of their locality in particular. Since there is thus no attempt to build two systems of belief with a yawning gulf between, conflict between parents and children is avoided.

THIS is perhaps not the program that American Jews must undertake in order to "carry on the great traditions of Jewish learning and intensify its spiritual energies, so that it may be worthy of the cultural and spiritual trust to which it has become heir." Our approach will inevitably be deeply resented by all who desire the survival in America of a distinctive, intense Jewish religious culture. We shall be attacked, of course, as "parents on the borderline of assimilation, charity wardens, utter ignoramuses, or guardians of Judaism whose common denominator is the desire to minimize as far as possible the differences between the Jewish and the non-Jewish children and who are therefore contented with a program of Jewish education which is based essentially on remnants of a pale bloodless religion." On the other hand, I am confident that nothing will really satisfy the need of thousands of American Jewish families except a school that fully recognizes that our spiritual development has carried us forward to a humanitarian deism or naturalism, and that treats theology accordingly. Instead of devoting energy to reviving outworn observances, such a school should address itself to ethical and social teaching with specific and concrete relevance to our children's lives.

This defense of the "cultural amalgam" may sound like assimilationism. To my mind, however, the trend toward social "assimilation" is not by any means the major reason for disharmony between the religious school and the modern home. The chief reason is that the evaluation of the survival value of important aspects of Judaism, its holidays, its ritual, its language, its prayers, has changed, for modern Jews, as it has

changed for modern adherents of other faiths. To ward off disillusionment and cynicism, we need a truly human education open to the full climate of Western culture, not an artificial hothouse plant.

But I am asking that we do more than merely "water down" the emphasis on traditional Judaism: we must step vigorously forward on new paths. I am bold enough to assert that there is a goal which the Sunday school should set itself beyond the familiar objective of forming proud Jews. Why is it proving impossible to carry the good will, the cooperation, the social-mindedness, and the sacrifice of the war period into peacetime living? Why is so much disillusionment, frustration, indifference, and careerism present today in our society? Something is missing from our social life, something that our young people need but do not get from their present-day education. Here religion and a modern Sunday school might find their real and most urgent experimental task.

What synagogue will undertake this larger task, what temple will broaden itself out from its "purely" Jewish tasks and teach us in terms of this wider horizon? To my mind, it is no answer to say we must do the first—the "Jewish"—job first, and the second only when that is done. That way lies narrowness, or repudiation. We must do both together or we shall succeed in neither.

I challenge the argument that seems to be central to all professional Jewish cultural effort, namely, that Jews are specially and uniquely confused. All men are confused today. There would not be so much search for new banners to follow, so much talk about new values, about "modern man in search of a soul," nor would there be a turning toward mysticism, if men knew where they stood. Perhaps Jews are somewhat more confused than the rest—some because they have come from a national and religious ghetto civilization to the irreligious climate of American big-city life, some because they have become Jews only since Hitler, others because of anti-Semitism and Jewish disabilities, still others because of our inveterate Jewish intellectualizing. And of



course, besides being confused, all Jews are—no denying—"the object of the unfavorable attitude." ("It is a sombre privilege to be a Jew," said Santayana.)

Having asserted that the Jews are uniquely confused, the educator then asks what will "give them a feeling of assurance"? His answer is that they must accept themselves as "members of a distinct group of merit and worth." Granted. But I do not believe that many will find real reassurance in mere group loyalty, in following a path that looks so much to the *past*. If the content of the group is "barren" *today*—an observation made by this same Jewish educator—wherein then lies its "merit and worth"?

**W**E AND our children can find real assurance, as well as profound perplexity, only in moral freedom. We can find inner security only when we find our place in a humanity common to all men of good will and as we learn to work in cooperation with other such men on the great common social tasks that face our world. It is toward this central aim that our religious schools must address themselves. Such a program might have the possibilities of interesting children, of helping to create a wholesome group life. If we offered such a program, we might even succeed in attracting the very large group of indifferent parents now hostile to the religious schools, the so-called "unaffiliated."

Traditionalists and nationalists will not like this program: to the extent that it is successful, they will say accusingly that it will destroy a culture that has survived in its uniqueness for thousands of years. But this blames us for something that is in reality the result of an irresistible historic process. Let us choose to recognize the threat of present-day developments, and let us move to close the gulf that alienates our children from us and from their Judaism.

Still another reproach requires earnest consideration. Are we not contriving as the basis for our group-life a "liberal," bloodless doctrine of ethical universalism which deprives our group of all individuality and merely increases the uniformity of American life? Perhaps. But man striving for group life to overcome his loneliness inevitably develops richness and distinctiveness in that group life. Such differentiation cannot be "reconstructed" on some past model, nor can it be consciously commanded or planned in advance, as the plant-breeder develops a new variety of flower. Group variety must unfold step by step, and only through experimentation as a community do we discover what is still-born and what will live. No blueprint can help us.

Let us free the creative energies in Jewish community life. Our educational leaders will be surprised at the enthusiastic responsiveness they will find among children—and their parents.

## DENMARK: OASIS OF DECENCY

### *A Nordic Answer to the Nazi Myth*

HANS BENDIX

COPENHAGEN

THE Danes are the most homogeneous national group in Europe. For the most part the Danes of today are descendants of the people who inhabited the Danish islands in the Stone Age. The Kimbric peninsula, Jutland, is the cradle of the Teutons: the *Gottsons*. If a Nordic race exists, this is it. Yet no other of the occupied countries stood out more strongly against the racist doctrines of the Nazis.

This was in line with Danish tradition. For centuries, Denmark offered a haven to the persecuted and the outcast, Jews included—and Denmark never knew the meaning of a "Jewish problem."

There is no record of when the first Jews arrived in Denmark. But there must have been Jews there in 1657, when a law was passed allowing them to trade, though each was required to obtain a special permit. In 1676, we find the first Jew paying taxes: Israel Solomon Lewi, a tobacco manufacturer. In 1682, Jews are mentioned for the first time in the census: eleven heads of families, occupied with tobacco and jewels. The first Jewish holy services took place in 1684, but no sermons were permitted.

Although the customs and looks of Orthodox Jews were surely strange and alien to the blond and blue-eyed natives, they were welcomed as an existing element in the country's life. The Danes accepted them freely, and in the course of time the Danish

state admitted them to full legal equality. In 1814 the Jews were granted full trading rights and complete freedom of religion. Full political rights followed in 1849, when King Frederik VII gave Denmark a free constitution. And the Jews were able to live as secure and respected citizens of Denmark—until Hitler.

THE greater part of the Jewish community was always Ashkenazic, but until 1850 some Portuguese Jews performed their own holy services and even had their own cemeteries. After 1850 the dividing line began to disappear.

Religious freedom works both ways: if it is good for the cause of man, it is sometimes harmful to the cause of God. The Jews were absorbed by the Danes to such an extent that they were partly extinguished. Like any other people or race, the Jews do not always have the strength to survive kindness; it is persecution that favors isolation. In Denmark many Petersens, Jensens, and Hansens—typical Danish names—have "Jewish blood" in their veins.

Assimilation began in the last part of the 18th century. The first assimilated were Sephardim belonging to the upper classes of Jews. No doubt the ideas of the Encyclopedists and the French Revolution stimulated assimilation in Denmark, though a special royal license was still required for marriages between Jews and Gentiles.

The proportion of Jews in Scandinavia was always greater than in Germany. But there has never been a real pogrom in Scandinavia—only occasional minor incidents. In the time of King Frederik VI (1808-1839), a Jew was roughly handled by a crowd and some helpful people protected him to his house. The king immediately struck down

DURING the past war HANS BENDIX served as head of the Danish section of the Office of War Information. He was editor-in-chief of the pre-war anti-Nazi periodical *Aandehullat* in Copenhagen, has written for French and Danish publications and the *Saturday Review of Literature*, and has published books in Danish and English. He is now back in Copenhagen, working on a book on Denmark. Mr. Bendix was born in 1898.

the anti-Semitic disturbers of the peace, and citizens and officials followed him without faltering. Meir Aaron Goldschmidt (1819-1887) in his book *A Jew*—it is a Danish classic—describes the forms of Jewish assimilation in Denmark: how the Jews were occupied mainly in banking, the jewelry trade, commerce, and the garment trade, and later in the professions and the arts. Typical for the position of the Danish Jew at the time is an episode from Goldschmidt's own life. At a national meeting, Goldschmidt gets up and asks from the platform, rather tragically: "What do I want among you? Why am I here?" And the Danes reply, puzzled but kindhearted: "O—yes-yes." One sees the Jew, a little comedian-like, angling for applause, and listening happily to the slightly doltish Danish "Jo-jo." Today, of a population of 4,000,000, around 8,000 are Jews, 3,000 being old Danish Jews (Sephardim) and another 3,000 immigrants from Eastern Europe (Ashkenazim); about 2,000 are German immigrants who came after 1933. Virtually all of them live in Copenhagen. Danish provincial Jews are to be considered lost for Jewry—in many cases, they have forgotten their origin.

The list of Jewish names in Danish culture, science, and art comprises not only men of international fame like the critic Georg Brandes or the half-Jewish physicist Niels Bohr, but also men of Jewish or part-Jewish origin who have helped to create Danish culture in its most typically national manifestations.

The Danish commander-in-chief in 1864, General de Meza, who defended our frontier against Bismarck, was of Jewish-Portuguese origin. An extremely colorful and courageous man, but no lover of military smartness, he exposed himself recklessly in battle, but always with a heavy woolen scarf wrapped around his head and neck—he was mortally afraid of catching cold. The greatest actress of the Danish romantic "golden age" was Marie Louise Heiberg, daughter of a Jewish innkeeper and his Gentile wife. No Danish book may be described as more genuinely national than the famous *En Re-*

*krut fra 64* ("Enlisted Man of 1864"), which depicted the German-Danish war; it was written by the army colonel Peter Frederik Rist, a half-Jew. The books and plays of Peter Nansen (Nathan) constitute a clear embodiment of the light Danish wit. Meir Aaron Goldschmidt and the playwright Henri Nathansen have dealt penetratingly with the amalgamation of Jews into the Danish nation.

Particularly striking is the truly Danish character of the Jewish painters Albert Gottschalk and Theodor Philipsen. The latter is today considered one of Denmark's greatest painters; his landscapes and scenes of peasant life are marked with the same stamp as our butter and bacon: "Made in Denmark."

The older Jewish families continued their affiliation with the Jewish faith society, "Mosaisk Trossamfund," and simultaneously assimilated with the Danish population. By the time Hitler appeared, the Danes had almost forgotten that Jews lived among them. So had many Jews. To be called "Jode" at school was no more insulting than to be nicknamed "Jyde" (Jutlander), or "Plok" (peg) if the boy happened to be the son of a shoemaker. If there still existed a kind of literary-religious tradition of anti-Semitism—the Lutheran religious books, compulsory in the schools, still taught that vicious Jews killed Jesus—the individual Jew did not feel himself directly threatened by it.

WHEN Hitler came to power in Germany, the word "Jew" lost its humorous sound in Danish ears. Nazi Germany was so near and so big, Denmark so small. A certain awareness of the Danish Jews began to develop. In Copenhagen the synagogue celebrated its centennial in April 1933. The King and his suite attended the ceremonies. This was just after the German boycott of Jews, when the sign "Jude" was pasted on all Jewish shops and warehouses in Berlin. But the Danish newspapers made much of the King's attendance at the synagogue celebration and the newspaper boys shouted, "What says Adolf?" In 1938, when the synagogues in Germany were burnt, the Danish

*Christian Daily* collected thousands of kroner for distressed Jews. The Danes abandoned that characteristic "mental chastity" which refused to recognize any difference among Danish citizens, and now they went out of the way to express sympathy and solidarity. Meeting their fellow citizens of Jewish origin, they would cross the street and silently shake hands with them. This meant more than mere sympathy. It meant a pledge of full support, should ever disaster fall upon the Danish Jews. And the Danes kept their pledge.

**W**HEN the Germans occupied Denmark on the 9th of April 1940, they proclaimed that they came only to protect the country against the British; Danish life and independence would not be interfered with. There were then about 7,900 Jews in the country, including about 1,400 who had come as refugees after 1933. Not until late in 1943 did they feel the heavy hand of Nazism.

In August of that year the Germans, in an effort to control increasing waves of sabotage, began to put Danish saboteurs on trial before German military courts. This was a breach of the Danish constitution, and the government resigned in protest. Denmark remained without a government until May 4, 1945, when Germany surrendered.

Hitler's representative in Denmark, Dr. Best, was known as a violent anti-Semite. "History tells us," he said, "that it is compatible with the law of life to exterminate a people if it is only done completely."

In August 1943, when the Danish government resigned, some prominent Jews were arrested, including the president of the Mosaic Faith Society, the well-known lawyer C. B. Henriques, and the rabbi Dr. Friedieger. Most of them were quickly released. The Nazis appeared to be in some confusion about how they were to treat Danish Jews. But a month later the persecution began. To frighten Denmark into submission and to avenge the constant sabotage, Hitler decreed a terror against Danish Jews.

When the king was informed that the

Jews were ordered to wear the yellow Star of David, he said, "We have no Jewish problem, for we Danes do not consider ourselves inferior to the Jews." But in this case, he added, he and his family would all wear the star "as a sign of the highest distinction."

Danish Jews were helped in every possible way to flee to Sweden. The police called on Jews in their homes and took them in ambulances to waiting fishing boats. Many Danes risked their lives to help. Some Jews who refused to leave the country were hidden in the hospitals under false names: overnight about 400 sudden cases of serious illness augmented the hospital rolls. One old and highly esteemed Jewish citizen said to his rescuers: "I am an old man and my heart is not too good. Furthermore, I prefer to die in my own nest. I don't put up with that kind of thing, anyway." When told that he had to flee for the sake of his wife and those nearest to him, he answered: "It seems to me, under the circumstances, that my shirt is near, but nearer is my skin." Nevertheless, he was carried away and so well hidden during the whole Nazi occupation that he and his inseparable wife together bade the broken Nazi armies good-by from Copenhagen.

About 17,000 Danes escaped to Sweden during the war, of whom about 7,000 were Jews; 490 Jews were taken to the Theresienstadt concentration camp in Germany; 51 of these died, most of them of old age. Four hundred Jews stayed in hiding in Denmark with false identity cards and passports.

The treatment of Danish Jews in concentration camps remains a mystery. At Theresienstadt, where all others were sent on to the extermination camps of Dachau and Auschwitz, the Danish Jews were relatively well treated, and just before the end of the war were allowed to go to Sweden. Those in the Jewish concentration camp in Horslerod, Denmark, were also leniently treated and finally got out and fled to Sweden. A great deal was done by bribing the German guards. But why was Hitler on the whole so lenient towards Denmark? Perhaps Churchill was right when he called Den-



mark "Hitler's canary," referring to the fact that even the worst criminal may have a weak spot and might care sentimentally for a canary. Norway was no canary of Hitler's: only 40 of its 1,100 Jews survived.

Valdemar Koppel, former editor of one of the biggest dailies, *Politiken*, describes life in Horserød, where he was taken after trying to escape from the country. (A German patrol asked what he was doing on a dark road, and Koppel was so taken by surprise that he replied, "I am escaping.") A great many of the internees at the camp were poor stateless emigrants from Germany, who had come to live in Copenhagen during the years after Hitler's accession to power. But many were well-known Danes—for example, Hanna Adler, the 84-year-old aunt of Niels and Harald Bohr, and founder of a modern school. There were also many well-known scientists, lawyers, doctors, and artists. The king's doctor, Professor Warburg, was there. Koppel writes of him that he enjoyed not only the attachment of the Danish internees whom he helped with sleeping pills and medical care, but also the respect of the Germans: soldiers stood at attention when he gave his orders, and when he walked beside the commander of the camp one felt that he was the superior.

THE salvation of the Danish Jews was an unselfish and widely branching job performed by virtually the whole nation. Young people sacrificed their time, their energy, their sleep, risking severe punishment, sometimes their health and lives. Money to bribe Germans and pay for the expensive transports poured in from all sides. The Danish authorities, political parties, and public institutions participated. Fishermen, merchant and naval seamen, private people who owned boats—all joined in the task of transporting the Jews across the Sound to Sweden. Doctors, nurses, and students in the hospitals, as well as Lutheran church people, worked tirelessly in organizing the mass escape.

Many who did not take an active part demonstrated their solidarity in other ways. They would stop a Jew on the street and

say: "You don't know me, but I know you. I am so-and-so. Here is the key to my apartment in case you should need it." Some Jews got to Sweden with four or five different latch-keys in their pockets.

With but few exceptions, the Danish people showed an unfailing warmheartedness, a natural and selfless helpfulness. The Danish Jews who experienced the terrible threats of October 1943 can never forget it.

Paul Robeson, asked where he would prefer to live, said, "In Russia; you don't feel you are a Negro there." "Yes—but in the Scandinavian countries we don't have race prejudice either." "True," he said, "but the difference is that people in Scandinavia are so civilized that they set race differences aside; in Russia you don't even think of them."

That may be. But Russia is a compound of many races. Without the Mongolian, Slavic, Baltic, and all the other races, there would be no Russia. The wonder in Denmark is that the most homogeneous group of people in the world has shown most friendliness towards another race.

This is not to say that Denmark today is so ideal a state that anti-Semitism may not appear in times of economic depression and unemployment, or that it does not already exist in certain areas. But the fact remains that the Danish people, in spite of the grave hardships they themselves had to cope with, rose almost *en masse* to help the Jews escape the Nazis.

One important factor in determining their attitude was a simple revulsion against the bestiality of the Germans. They displayed a traditionally Danish attitude of mind in wishing to show good manners in opposition to German "bad manners." And it remains to Denmark's eternal credit that the Danish Jews suffered less than any other Jews of Europe during the Hitler disaster.

NOW that the war is over, and the Jews have returned to Denmark, the Mosaic Faith Society has been re-established. Most Jewish children are pupils in the Danish state and community schools, but the Faith

Society conducts a Jewish school where immigrant children are acclimatized. In the cities we have no special districts where Jews live—no ghettos. The Faith Society consists of a small circle of well-to-do Jews belonging to the old Sephardic families and a majority of less prosperous newcomers. The latter have in the past had some difficulties in procuring working permits, since the trade unions fear the competition of immigrants, but the situation has been eased since the war by the extreme need for manpower in all fields. Denmark is one of the world's finest agricultural countries. The Faith Society provides agricultural education and training for Jews wishing to proceed to Palestine.

Today Denmark's Jews are reassuming their places in the Danish community. But as elsewhere, the poison of Hitlerism has not failed to leave its traces. There is a certain new awareness of the Jews, and a new tendency to discuss the "Jewish problem" when Jews are not present. Liberal-minded men with the best intentions are today publicly discussing it in the newspapers. Before the war this would have been considered unforgivably tactless. Many Jews would still prefer to hush-hush the subject. But after the millions killed in Europe during these years it is naive to deny the existence of the problem, and it is best not to allow it to grow in silence. When one hears innuendoes on the behavior of the Danish Jews—their escape, their stay in Sweden, their return—one has to admit the existence of a mild form of anti-Semitism. A number of Jews had money to bring with them on their flight to Sweden. Less fortunate Gentiles do not always reflect that many Gentiles also made this wise and important provision for the maintenance of life. Gentiles and Jews alike got good positions in the Danish refugee organizations in Sweden; nevertheless, a one-sided jealousy has been unavoidable. Textiles have for years been unobtainable in Denmark, and the refugees from Sweden returned dressed in strikingly new clothes. Many non-Jewish women returned after the capitulation dressed, like some of their Jewish sisters, in

Swedish corduroy trousers, which were greatly in demand in Denmark. But the trousers are now called "Jewpants." This kind of generalizing is an old story in Jewish history, but new for Denmark.

Other small examples of current anti-Semitism: It is asked why, in an agricultural state, so few Jews work the soil, and in this peaceful nation they even ask why few Jews become military men. I lately overheard some fishermen and fish dealers in a barber shop discussing the fight against the British in Palestine. One of them spoke of the trouble that Jews are "always stirring up." Said he: "I am a fool. I risked my life to bring some of those people to Sweden. I should have taken their money and drowned them three miles from land." But many others admire the courage of the Jewish underground in Palestine. "It is good to see Jews fighting for their rights instead of letting others fight for them." It is significant that Danish soldiers who volunteered for the sixth British army parachute division and were sent to Palestine have asked to be exempted from the fight against the Jewish people.

Zionism has no adherents among the old Jewish families in Denmark, but many of the Ashkenazim and some second-generation Danes are Zionists. But Danish Sephardim have joined with other Jews all over the world in protesting against the British White Paper, and have contributed financially to the upbuilding of Palestine.

The complete assimilation of the older Jewish families now appears to have a certain disadvantage. Danes in general are not aware that such military men as General de Meza and Colonel Rist were part-Jewish, or that many Danish farmers with names like Hansen, Petersen, Jensen, are of Jewish origin. Perhaps Jews should be reminded that fate has placed on every Jew the duty to be a living witness for his people. Perhaps the Danish Jews and their friends should speak up—for Denmark has every reason to be proud of its Jews, and proud of its own courage and humanity in standing by them so firmly in the worst hour of their history.

## THE STRANGE CASE OF SARAH E.

### *An Episode of Nazi Europe*

KARL FRUCHT

**W**HEN the convoys arrived the first truck always carried the women prisoners. The prettiest invariably climbed down from the seat next to the driver. The girls stood around stiff-legged and bedraggled, looking forlorn and somehow desperate—until the male prisoners began relieving themselves right by the trucks. The guards would stop them at bayonet point—not because of the feminine company but simply because the stench was horrible—and rush them into the cage. Men came first in this war. Women could wait. Their turn came after the 1,000 or 1,200 men were stowed away; then they were herded into their special enclosure and more or less forgotten by everyone but the male PW's.

We seldom bothered with the girls. There was no time. We got all kinds: German nurses, Luftwaffe "*Blitz-Maedchen*" and auxiliaries of different Wehrmacht branches, now and then an SS girl, and toward the end the CI (counter-intelligence) cases who had been arrested for security reasons, for being Party bosses or just for having married Party bosses. We never expected anything from women's interrogations. They were

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KARL FRUCHT is the scarcely concealed "Sergeant Franck" of this incredible story, which plainly falls into the "stranger than fiction" class. It tells one of his experiences as a member of an Army Prisoner of War Interrogation team in Europe during the last war. He recounted others in an article in the January 1946 COMMENTARY. Mr. Frucht was born in Czechoslovakia in 1911, earned an LL.D. at the University of Vienna, and worked as an editor, journalist, and researcher in Vienna until 1938. He moved on to anti-Nazi propaganda work in Paris, and social work in Lisbon, whence he came to the United States in 1941. He is now engaged in research and writing in New York City. The present article is part of a forthcoming book.

handled in routine fashion and evacuated as fast as possible.

And yet, our most incredible case of the campaign was a woman prisoner shortly before VE Day. We might well have missed her except for Captain Wilkins.

**C**APTAIN WILKINS was a woman herself, a Wac. Nobody knew why she came down into the mud of Hersfeld instead of staying at Army Headquarters in Weimar. We guessed the captain, no longer young, could not stand the competition at Weimar.

Captain Wilkins asked to be shown around the cage. She said she wanted to study social problems; she was supposed to deal with German women after the war. She knew a little German; she came from St. Paul.

Sergeant Franck suggested a look at the girls' cage. A new transport had just arrived and the women were marched over in single file, on a narrow path between concertina barbed wire. Boards had been laid across the mud, but it usually happened that all had to step off the boardwalk to let a detail of stretcher-carriers pass, live PW's carrying dead PW's, blanketed bodies of victims of exposure, exhaustion, disease, suicide, or revenge. There usually was an elderly woman prisoner who would start crying, "He looks like my son—please, let me see him," and lift a corner of a blanket, only to drop it again with a scowl, "Isn't it terrible what's become of Germany?"

Only a few in the lot wore uniforms or parts of them. There were two SS auxiliaries, one girl from the German Signal Corps, one from an anti-aircraft unit, and one from the RAD, the Reich Labor Service.

These five were prisoners of war. The others were CI cases. "My father is an Old

Fighter—*ein alter Kaempfer*," one of them started abruptly, "and I assure you he'll take proper action when he hears what happened to me." Then she burst into tears.

Eventually they were lined up in their enclosure. Bunched against the tent walls were two dozen from an earlier transport, waiting to be transferred to the next cage. These were not happy about the new arrivals. "There's room in the latrine tent," they yelled.

A PW brought a box of food. The MP started throwing K-rations to the new ones. The Old Fighter's daughter stopped crying and tore into the package with teeth and nails. Another, an SS girl, dropped hers and it fell in the mud. She did not stoop to recover it, but stood staring ahead, seeing nothing, as if in a trance. The next girl nudged her and, when nothing happened, pointed her finger at her own forehead and then at her staring friend. Her meaning was clear. The other was out of her mind. That also happened frequently.

Captain Wilkins picked out one of the better dressed women and spoke to her as at a garden party. "My name is Captain Wilkins."

The prisoner seemed delighted: "It's a pleasure to meet you, to meet a lady here." Then she turned up her nose, "I'm Frau Uhl."

Franck, checking papers, noticed that Frau Uhl had omitted her rank. She was a *Bannmaedelfuehrerin* in the BDM, the Nazi girls' organization. With the Nazis she had been the equal of an army colonel. With us she was an automatic arrest.

"Break it up, Uhl," Franck said. "Step over here and keep your trap shut. MP, keep an eye on her."

Captain Wilkins looked helpless. "What's wrong? She seemed to be a fine lady. Though one never knows these days. . . ."

"Let me handle that, Captain sir," said the sergeant.

**H**E LOOKED again at the stunned SS girl who had dropped her rations and not bothered to pick them up. She and her

friend made a strange couple: one slight, dark-haired, dog-tired; the other big, blonde, happy-go-lucky. It was hard to believe that the girls pictured on their identity cards were the same now standing before us in mud up to the ankles of their field-gray trousers, begrimed, unappetizing, their protruding bellies filled with bread, water, and potatoes.

Their papers did not identify them as SS auxiliaries. They had been issued by the German Labor Front. But the blonde—Gertrude So-and-so, according to the brown document—proudly showed the blood-type tattoo under her left armpit and claimed that they both had served in the same SS prisoner-guard company in charge of an "East-workers" battalion. The dark one nodded confirmation. But her certificate was differently colored, green, and the number had the prefix "A," standing for *Auslaender* and meaning "alien."

"*Ah ça*," said the sergeant, "a French SS girl. What do you know." He read aloud to the captain, "Rose-Marie Establet from Montauban, Tarn et Garonne, France."

"From Brussels, from Belgium," the dark girl protested weakly.

"What's the difference? Nazis grow everywhere," Franck said. There were fascists from all over Europe in the SS: the Albanian division "Skanderbeg," the Hungarian SS Cavalry, the Croatian division "Kama," the SS Panzer Grenadier Brigade "Nederland," the Estonian, Latvian, and Galician divisions, the Turkestan and Azerbaijan legions, the French SS Waffen-Grenadier Sturmbrigade "Frankreich," and the Vichy militia division "Charlemagne." Last but not least, SS Sturmbannfuehrer Degrelle's Belgian Panzer Grenadier Division "Wallonien." The Belgian Nazis had invented an interrogation method that our prisoner trustees sometimes wanted to apply: stand a man with his face to a wall and rub his nose until the bone shines through. SS-woman Establet was a Belgian? Franck would give her a Belgian.

He called for Goetz, the trusty who worked in the interrogation cage keeping



the map file up to date. It had been a full-time job until April 25th, when the Americans and Russians had met at Torgau. Since then Goetz had hung around, waiting for us to give him something to do; for Goetz liked to work and kept fit by making a few rounds about the cage in double time every morning, wearing the leather shorts of his Bavarian homeland and enviously watched by thousands of stiff-legged prisoners.

Franck ordered him to get Jacky. Jacky's first name was Jacques-Bernard; he was a Belgian-born corporal serving with CIC in Hersfeld, and he hated Germans like poison. He would tell SS-woman Establet whether or not she was a Belgian.

THE dark girl stood staring dumbly. Suddenly she swayed a little. Blonde Gertrude caught her, seated her on an empty K-ration box, knelt down before her and untied her shoe to lift the tucked-in trouser. A dirty, blood-soaked bandage was wrapped around Rose-Marie Establet's leg. Gertrude tightened the bandage.

"She's wounded," the Wac captain said in a shocked voice.

Gertrude shrugged. "It was her own fault. No one told her to get in the line of fire."

"Whose fire?" Franck asked.

"Oh, when the boys shot those Russians and Jews."

"Where?" Franck asked quickly.

The blonde looked up and shrugged. "I don't know. We just came by. They weren't our Russians."

"Où étiez-vous blessée?" Franck asked the dark girl. "Where were you wounded?"

Rose-Marie did not answer. Gertrude grinned again, pointing at her forehead. "Shellshocked, you know."

"Poor kid," said Captain Wilkins.

Franck cleared his throat and frowned. After all, these were SS girls. He was about to launch upon an indoctrination lecture when Goetz returned—alone. Jacky, he reported, was out on a pass.

"You're lucky," Franck told the girl. She did not seem to hear and he decided to question her himself. A demonstration of

our technique might not be bad for Captain Wilkins, either. "Well, Establet," he said, trying to look tough, "why did you get into the line of fire when your boys shot those Russians and Jews?"

The dark girl looked at him. It was the first time she seemed to come out of her apathy. Her eyes were large, hopeful, and terrified at the same time. She said, "I'm Jewish."

"You're—what?"

Franck was no interrogator. First, he was soft. Second, he could not control himself. That was why he had been assigned to office work. The point of our job was that the PW's should show their emotions to us, not that we should show ours to PW's.

"You," the sergeant sputtered, "you—an SS girl—you have the nerve to stand there and say you're Jewish?"

"I *am* Jewish," she said.

"That's what she tried to tell me, too," said Gertrude. "I told you she's not quite there."

"Shut up, you!"

Rose-Marie closed her eyes. She was shivering.

Captain Wilkins took over. "Why don't we go into a tent, Sergeant?" she asked. It seemed a good idea. They went into the next compound and entered one of the interrogation tents.

"Couldn't we get her some coffee?" Captain Wilkins asked. Franck went out and sent a trusty for some coffee. When he came back, the motherly Wac had the girl sitting on a chair and was soothing her. "Now," she said, "just calm down—*beruhigen Sie sich*." She winked at Franck to keep quiet. "*Jetzt erzählen Sie*—now tell us your story."

The story took half an hour in the telling. It came out in gasps and sobs and broken, incoherent sentences in German and French.

HER name was Sarah, the girl said. She used to live in Brussels. Her father was a diamond-cutter there, a Jew.

She had been fifteen when the Boche came to Belgium. They had fled to France—her parents, her brother Sammy and she,

and the family of her brother's friend. They had a car, but the car did not get them far. All roads were blocked by refugees. They were strafed by planes, too. They came to Compiègne, and then to Paris.

"When did you get to Paris?"

In the first days of June, she said. About a week ahead of the Boche. They had tried in vain to get a train to the South, to get a ride in a car, or to buy bicycles. In the end they had walked.

"Where did you leave the city?"

By the Porte d'Orléans; they had taken the subway to get there. Then they walked for days. They were bombed and strafed at Étampes, and again at Orléans.

"How did you cross the river at Orléans?"

There was a bridge. It was blown up just after they crossed—not five minutes later.

"It was? How many days had you been walking from Paris?"

The girl tried to remember. She tried to count. "Four days," she said.

Franck said nothing. The Wac captain asked him in English, "Why do you keep trying to trap her?"

The sergeant did not say that it was his job. Instead he quoted in German, half to the captain and half to the SS woman Establet, from *Summary of Restrictions whose Violations endanger Security, as listed in SHAEF Ordinance No. 1*: "The following capital offense punishable by death: wilful deception of Allied personnel on duty. . . ."

"But why should she lie?" asked the Wac captain. "Would it help her if she was Jewish?"

Not at present, said Franck, careful to revert to English. Now she came under Subsection 5c of the automatic arrest list: ALL FEMALE MEMBERS OF SS—regardless of religion or nationality. If she was French or Belgian, she was probably headed for a treason trial by her compatriots. If she were Jewish—which she wasn't, of course—the fact would be noted in our report and that would be all for the time being. But later it might be taken as evidence that she had been forced to join.

But all those foreign SS the sergeant had talked about—couldn't they have been forced to join?

The presumption was against it.

And if they were Jewish?

They couldn't be. . . .

FRANCK turned back to the girl, who sat staring at her feet again. "Go on. Where did you go from Orléans?"

They had gone south, she and her parents. Her brother had been killed at Orléans and they had lost her brother's friend and his family. A few times people let them ride on trucks or cars.

"Did you come through Blois?"

Yes, Blois and Tours.

"Then you must have come through Angoulême?"

Yes—that was where the soldiers had given them bread.

"French soldiers?"

No, not French—Czechoslovakian, Rose-Marie thought.

The sergeant chuckled. Captain Wilkins turned to him and whispered. "Do you really know all that?"

"Sure," he said, "I was there."

"Oh, were you really? What were you doing there?"

"Fighting."

"But we weren't at war then."

"I was."

The SS girl tried to follow them. She seemed to fear that they had found a hole in her story. She tried to be very precise: "We got to Bordeaux at night; there was a bombardment, and the soldiers we had met at Angoulême were getting on a ship."

"So we were," Franck told the captain. "We were embarking for England. That was my outfit." He left the Wac to shake her head in amazement and turned back to Rose-Marie. "Go on."

They had walked on to Agen and then to Montauban, to stand in line for hours at the Préfecture for a permit to stay, to stand outside the Hôtel de Ville whose walls were plastered with "want ads" seeking news of a husband or wife, a mother, father, sister,

brother, lover or sweetheart, to scale wooden ladders, because the notices were posted all the way up to the second floor. They slept in the open among people from Holland, Belgium, and France, among French and Polish and Czech soldiers and deserters and Senegalese and Moroccans. They found a small *auberge* where they could stay without papers, until one day the police came for her parents and they did not come back.

Then Rose-Marie made the round of the Vichy internment camps. She walked to Camp Recebedon in the Haute Garonne Department and to the barbed-wire fences of the penal camp of Le Vernet, Ariège, and to Camp Les Milles near Marseilles, where the internees were crowded by the thousands into a small brick factory. When she arrived at the Gurs camp in the Basses Pyrenées, one of the most desolate places in the world, she was detained as a suspect alien. After weeks of cold and hunger and despair she suddenly was released and a man she did not know handed her a railroad ticket and a slip carrying the name of some people she did not know and an address in Montauban. Then he wished her *bon voyage*. Rose-Marie did not understand a word. At the Montauban address, the next day, she asked an old lady for Monsieur and Madame Establet. This was the name on the paper. The lady led her through a courtyard to the rear of the building and up a spiral staircase to the top floor. She knocked—and her mother opened the door.

Then she learned how her parents had managed to bribe the guards on the convoy that was to have taken them to Gurs. They hid on farms until a reliable source gave them the address of an employee of the Montauban Préfecture who issued false identity papers to refugees, a certain Mr. Lefevre.

For what was left of their money, Mr. Lefevre also found out what had happened to the girl, arranged for her rescue, and transformed her into Rose-Marie Establet, a French girl from the Midi, a defense worker, Catholic, eighteen years old. It was two years more than her real age; she certainly had grown up. Her parents no longer dared

to go out on the street—it seemed they could only talk Yiddish—so it fell to Rose-Marie to do the shopping, and when the money ran out to do the working.

She became a salesgirl. Her employer fired all his Jewish employees; but Rose-Marie could stay. She had to stop seeing the few refugees left of the many she had known. She read the posters when all foreign Jews from 18 to 55 years of age were organized into "work battalions" and sent to Germany. She heard of the thousands handed over by the Vichy government, from camps and from the street, of the convoys that no longer passed the "collecting point" at Drancy but went directly to Eastern Europe. She heard of the great Gestapo hunt at Nice that alone netted some 5,000 victims. She also heard of Frenchmen's efforts to help, of the widespread "Aryanization" of Jewish children whose parents had been deported, of secret convoys said to have taken such children to safety—but she did not know if that was true.

"NEITHER did SS-Hauptsturmfuehrer Bug," said Sergeant Franck and could not resist the temptation to give Captain Wilkins a quick orientation on the French "underground railroad." He had typed a report on the "Organization des Passeurs" only a few days earlier. The informant had been an Alsatian deserter. The group's main activity had been to help French war prisoners escape and evacuate them to Africa; it had members in Germany and Vichy; half of the group were women, including Madame Receveur who worked for the Nazis in the Alsatian concentration camp of Schirmeck and rescued many prisoners under the nose of Hauptsturmfuehrer Bug. The report had been one of the most dramatic we ever put out—but Captain Wilkins did not seem as interested in it as in Rose-Marie's story.

In February 1943 a Vichy law had imposed a labor draft on all men from 18 to 60 and all women from 18 to 45. It did not affect the girl's parents but it affected her, Rose-Marie Establet, a Catholic and now twenty, according to her papers. Failure to

register meant loss of food and clothing rations. She registered. She was not called up for a while, though—not until she had heard of one girl from Montauban who hanged herself in a German pig-sty after one beating too many by the woman she was working for. Another girl had her face marred by a blow; from the hospital she only wrote about an accident. Rose-Marie, with papers identifying her as a defense worker, could at least expect a job in industry. She thought it would mean better treatment.

The morning when she and fifty others were herded together on the Place Nationale, in front of the deserted cafés under the empty arcades, disabused her. Her mother, for the first time in years, had left the house. In the gray dawn the girl could see the tears on her mother's face and her father leaning out of the window of their top-floor hideout with his white beard flowing in the wind. When they ordered the fifty women to get on the truck and Rose-Marie tore herself away from her mother, she suddenly heard a sound not uttered aloud in years: right on the Place Nationale, amid Vichy police and in front of the German officer supervising the loading, her mother cried out as only those can cry who have been persecuted for centuries: "Aiaiai, Sarale, aiaiai. . . ." And looking down from the truck, Sarah—or rather, Rose-Marie Establet—saw her mother crumple at the German's feet before the truck pulled out.

The girl paused a moment. Franck felt a hand on his arm; the gesture contravened military regulations, but at this moment the woman beside him was not an officer in the US Armed Forces. She was a social worker whose heart had been touched by a case the like of which was unknown in Minnesota. "You still think she's lying?" she asked. "You still think she could be lying?"

The sergeant said nothing. He wanted to say that the girl had only to hide the fact, for instance, that she had worked for the German military government in Montauban; there she would have learned all that and more. He wanted to say that only yesterday we had a kid who ate two pages

of his pay book, and would have fooled us into taking him for just a Hitler youth employed by the Wehrmacht and entitled to immediate release if PW's had not picked him out as a non-com who shot two men of his platoon when they tried to surrender. We had cases like that every day. Why should the SS girl be different? But Franck said nothing.

The captain seized the girl's hand. It was small but strong, with dirty, bitten fingernails and scars and bloodstains; the captain dropped it again. "Go on," she said.

SS-woman Establet continued. She told a story we had heard a thousand times, from French and Belgian and Dutch and Polish DP's. The stories differed only in degree, and those of the French were not the worst. They all told of riding in cattle cars, without food, of stopping to sleep in bartacks, without blankets, of traveling for three days and nights through the bomb-blasted Reich and arriving in Leipzig or some other city to see a factory near the track still burning, of being unloaded, hardly able to stand, and broken up into smaller groups and marched off as from a slave market: "Group one, Leipzig Koellmann A.G.—on the double, *marsch-marsch!* Group two, Leipzig Langbein Pfannhauser Werke—on the double, we have no time to lose! Next group, *allez hopp*, Leipzig Mitteldeutsche Motorenwerke; and one more to go, hurry, hurry, you lazy bastards, we're not in France, this is Germany! Last group Junkers Werke Leipzig, *marsch-marsch!*" Rose-Marie was in the last group.

He could check her on that, Franck thought. He only needed to send for Sergeant Howard's target list. The Junkers Werke at Markkleeberg near Leipzig were there in all detail—and their 3,000 workers, 70 per cent foreign. The sergeant needed only to call for Goetz. He said nothing. The girl continued.

SHE told of getting her residence permit from the police—granted for an indefinite period and accordingly stamped "*Bis auf weiteres*"—for ten marks, and her *Arbeitsbuch* (work book) for five marks. She told



of the work, done in two 12-hour shifts under the eyes of about eight Gestapo men and many stool pigeons. She told of having been suspected of sabotage, and having been doubly terrified because of the secret of her true identity. She had seen Russians and Poles among the foreign workers, but no Jews. She never asked what had become of the Jews who had lived here, or elsewhere. She lived in terror, and terror made her work so well that she was officially appointed a *Verbindungsmann* for liaison between the DAF, the German Labor Front, and her compatriots.

"You mean, a spy," the sergeant corrected her, "a Gestapo informer."

"Yes," the girl said.

"And you did that work, too?"

"Yes," the girl said.

From that day on the others had despised her. When she wanted to share her larger rations they refused, though they were nearly starving. They loathed Rose-Marie Establet more than they loathed the Germans. But the head of the Werkschutz, the Nazi factory protection setup, a bulky SA-man from Dortmund, promised her a fur-lough home after three reports on her less efficient co-workers. After her third report he beamingly appraised her of something much more honorable than a home leave. She was judged one of the few foreign girls worthy of joining the ranks of the SS. She had only to sign her application to leave for a training camp; it was most fortunate, he said, that he had just been asked to recommend candidates for SS auxiliaries. She really was too able to risk having her damaged by some jealous foreign workers.

Rose-Marie signed. The training camp was a slave-labor camp in Silesia. It was there she met Gertrude. Gertrude was kind, the first person who had been kind to her since Montauban. It was the last cruel winter and at night they lay together under one blanket, and Gertrude somehow managed to prevent the SS-men at the camp from bothering Rose-Marie. In the spring, when the Russians overran Silesia, the camp was evacuated. That is to say, the SS guard was

evacuated. The workers, Russians and Poles and Jews, were shot. Rose-Marie looked on as the guards mowed them down with machine guns.

That night she told Gertrude that she was Jewish. But Gertrude would not believe her. Their truck convoy, headed for Leipzig, raced the Russians up through Silesia. On the way they passed another labor camp with trucks outside ready to move and the prisoners lined up in a ditch ready to be killed. Their convoy stopped and the SS-men got off to join in the fun. The girls got off too, to watch, and Rose-Marie ran toward the prisoners and was shot in the leg. Gertrude pulled her back and she was lifted into the truck. She did not really know what happened later, until she sat with Gertrude and the other women in our truck and came to our cage.

THE story ended abruptly somewhere in the middle. It was finished, though—complete. There was a long pause. SS-woman Establet sat with half-closed eyes as if exhausted by this recital of her own disintegration. Captain Wilkins looked down at her with something like disappointment. Gertrude, the big, happy-go-lucky blonde, stood in a corner watching her friend with an oddly twisted smile. Sergeant Franck reviewed the incredible tale in his mind, searching for a hole in it. He found none. The web was complete. The girl was lying or she was telling the truth; it was an interrogator's job to find out which, but she had not obliged him by making the job easier.

"Well," he finally said in a voice full of sarcasm. "So now you'd like to be Jewish again. Only you aren't."

"It doesn't really matter much, does it?" the Wac broke in, a little sadly.

Franck did not get her meaning. Somehow, for him, there seemed to be more at stake than just the truth or falsehood of a PW statement. He said, "Who d'you think we are, Establet? Think you can fool us that easily?"

The girl looked at him fully. "I know why you won't believe me. You're Jewish, too. You don't want me to be. You're scared

of it. Oh, they were right about the Jews—they were right!" she burst out. Then she turned to the motherly woman, "Maybe the lady will believe me. *Je vous en prie*—"

Franck thought he saw the ghost of a smile on the captain's face. It made him furious. He walked over to the girl, very slowly, coming closer and closer: "So you say you're Jewish, do you? You think you're a smart girl. Well, you won't go through with it, I promise you—not you from the SS. You'll take everything back, understand? Everything."

A giggle came from Gertrude's corner. "Why do you bother with her? She's crazy."

"Shut up," said the sergeant. And to the dark girl, "So you still say you're—"

"I am Jewish," she interrupted him, wildly. "I was born in Brussels—my name is Sarah—I am Jewish—*verstehste*, Yiddish—*je suis juive*—a *yidene*—*ich, Sarah, bin eine Juedin!*" Then she collapsed on the table.

The grin on Gertrude's dirty face was frozen. She looked at Franck, at the Wac captain, at her friend. Then she shrugged, casually, "I told you she's crazy," and came and stroked the thin shaking shoulders until the whining stopped.

Suddenly Rose-Marie got up from the table. Her voice was louder and stronger than the sergeant's. "My name is Sarah. I am Jewish."

She did not collapse again. Gertrude's smile faded for the first time. Before Franck could say more, the Wac captain stepped in and asked the girl to sit down again. Then she opened the tent door and called out for another cup of coffee.

ROSE-MARIE's voice had attracted quite an audience. Looking through the window holes into the tent, despite a shower from fast moving clouds reddened by the sunset, were MP's, trustees, PW's waiting their turn to be interrogated, interrogators, members of the CIC team. It was very quiet. The constant murmur of the cage was no longer noticed. But the water could be heard dripping from the leaky tent roof into the C-ration can with the coffee for Rose-Marie.

"Why you *sagen* you are *juedisch*?" the Wac captain resumed the interrogation. "It won't make a difference."

"*Es macht doch keinen Unterschied*," Franck had to translate, and he repeated, "You are an SS auxiliary like any other, Jewish or not. You'll be held responsible for every crime committed by your unit."

"I know," she nodded. "I'll take my punishment like Gertrude." But Gertrude did not smile again.

The sergeant still wanted to pin the girl down on the motive for her story. True or not, he had to crack her on that. "Why do you want to convince us if it won't make any difference to you?"

She clenched her teeth and said nothing.

He was stumped for questions, and so he asked her again: "How can you prove you're Jewish? We can't look into your heart."

And the girl all but tore off her blouse, hammering small white breasts with her dirty fists: "Here I'm Jewish, and I can't help it if you can't see it. Here—here—"

Captain Wilkins' eyes begged the sergeant to drop that line of questioning. The captain had thrown a blanket around the girl's shoulders.

Then Sergeant Howard came in with two of his trustees and one PW. Howard apologized for disturbing Franck; he could not assume, of course, that Franck was interrogating. He explained that there really was no other space available; the April wind had torn a few tents down, and others were leaking in the rain.

There followed a typical Howard interrogation of the PW he had brought with him, fast and furious, but the case was routine. Howard could break her. Howard would put his long forefinger under her chin and lift her up from the chair with one quick jerk—she would not long refuse to tell him why she kept insisting that she was Jewish. Howard was sitting on the table now with his back to her, firing questions at a routine PW. If he heard about the case behind his back he would drop the man in five seconds and break the girl in five minutes.

"Are we in the way?" Captain Wilkins whispered to Franck.

No—well, perhaps. Besides, it was time for chow. They could question the girl again, later. The sergeant bellowed at Gertrude who stood by the door, "*Machen Sie, dass Sie aus dem Weg kommen, marschmarsch*—get out of the way, but snappy, understand!"

Howard kept right on interrogating. Franck shoved Gertrude aside and held the tent door open for the Wac captain. They did not look back at Rose-Marie. Outside, the captain asked, "What will happen to her?"

Franck shrugged his shoulders.

IN THE chow line Franck saw the Belgian-born CIC interpreter he had sent Goetz to get. Jacky had just returned from a three-day pass to Brussels where he had searched vainly for survivors of his family; Jacky was Jewish. The sergeant confided in Jacky. The chow line was surprised when the Belgian gave up his place just outside the mess hall. "*Tant mieux pour vous*—so much the better for you," he told the men behind him and followed Franck to the cage.

It was not quite dark yet. The fires the prisoners had built in the daytime were still allowed to burn. In the women's cage, separated from the huge men's compound only by one row of concertina barbed wire, they saw the girls talking to the German boys while the guards stood by with wolves' eyes, jealously listening to the giggles and laughter, waiting for the moment to cut in, perhaps waiting for nightfall.

The command-post tent was pitch-dark, filled with whimpers and snores. "Rose-Marie Establet!" the sergeant shouted.

"Present," came the answer in a timid voice, close by.

No candle was lighted, no flashlight turned on. Jacky started his interrogation in French; Rose-Marie responded without hesitation or difficulty.

"Where would you find the Great Synagogue in Brussels?"

She sounded overjoyed. "*Mais oui, dans*

*la rue aux Laines, près de la Porte du Namur.*"

"Check." Jacky shot another question. "Name me a few suburbs of Brussels."

The girl took a long breath and then started off without pause: "Schaerbeck, St. Josse-ten-Noode, Etterbeck, Ixelles, St. Gilles, Andetkecht, Molenbeck, Kockelberg. . ."

"*Assez, mademoiselle*, enough, stop."

He checked on a few more things, on ritual customs at Jewish holidays, on Jewish history, and soon they were not speaking French any more, nor German either, but Yiddish.

When Jacky ran out of questions, he searched in the darkness with his flashlight. And then the incredible happened. When the beam fell on the girl's face, after hardly enough time for recognition, Jacky gasped in surprise: "*Sarahleben, was machste da—Sarah—you?*"

Franck lighted the candle, and it shone on her weeping face. Jacky took the girl's head firmly in his hands, to reassure himself, and now she knew him, too.

"Jacques-Bernard."

"Where is your brother, Sarah? Tell me about Sammy. . ."

"Sammy was killed on the road, by planes, in summer '40. Sammy is dead. But you'll get me news from *mamele* and *tateleben*, won't you?"

"*Mais oui*, Sarah. Sure. Sure. Now go to sleep. Come, we'll put you up in the hospital tent, on a litter, with a lot of blankets, and we'll bring you chocolate. Don't cry."

"I'm not crying," the girl sobbed. "I'm happy. Now I'm Jewish again."

The next day's transport took SS-woman Establet, with an appropriate entry in her papers, from the cage to MIC at Schwarzenborn in Hesse, together with her friend Gertrude. About a week later, amid the VE Day excitement, our Belgian friend Jacky received a transfer to another CIC office, in Kassel or Giessen; we did not quite know which.

We never met him again. And we never heard what became of the Jewish SS-girl. Perhaps we were not curious.

## FROM THE AMERICAN SCENE

### THE CARD PLAYER: HIS RISE AND FALL

#### *Changing Patterns Around the Table*

NATHAN HALPER

**M**Y PARENTS had a small basement restaurant. It was on Henry Street, near Jefferson. Right in the middle of the old East Side.

A meal cost 22 cents. Appetizer, meat and a potato, soup, dessert, a glass of tea—plus all the bread and seltzer you wanted. A few had a special arrangement. Two courses for dinner, the next two for supper. Later, during the evening, they had the glass of tea.

The customers used to stay as long as one let them. Those who knew the ropes went into the little room between the restaurant and kitchen—They sat there.

They played chess. Played dominoes. Played cards.

As a rule—they played cards.

They were young. Factory-workers.

Most of them, however, were saving their money. Meant to have a business of their own. Some were going to a night school. Learning English. Preparing to study a profession. True—there was Sam.

Sam was a cigar-maker. When he worked, he would get a good wage. Only—he had a conscience. A social conscience.

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NATHAN HALPER's qualifications for this informal study include some thirty years of activity as player and kibitzer around the card tables he fondly describes here. Mr. Halper was born in Manhattan in 1907 and received his A.B. from Columbia University in 1927. In five years of army service he accumulated considerable additional data—often to his sorrow—about novel types of card players and kinds of card playing. He is at present working on articles concerning two of his other major interests: chess and James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*.

Any time there was a strike, Sam used to strike too. A sympathy strike. No matter what shop. No matter what trade. Sam had a real talent—he always managed to find a place where they were striking.

He was an exception. The others? Well. . . .

Here is one—he got a shop. Here is one—he got a store. Here is one—became a doctor. Here's a dentist. Here's a lawyer.

This was back in 1912. During the next thirty-five years, they—and their like—became the very heart of the Jewish community.

There they sat. A cross-section of tomorrow's Jewish community.

They were drinking a glass of tea. They were playing a game of cards!

**I**N Europe—who used to play cards? *Kartevnik*, card player—was a term of odium.

A card player's children always used to go hungry. Card players? Once, on a Yom Kippur Eve, two started to play. They got a little tallow candle, one that ought to last an hour. When it went out, they would get a bite. Then, they would go to Kol Nidre.

The Devil, getting an inch, immediately took a foot.

The candle continued to burn.

Finally, it went out. But—it was too late.

No prayer. No penance. No peace. They had played through the whole of a Yom Kippur.

Cards?

Who used to play cards?



My grandma gave meals to some of the boys at the Yeshiva. My Ma tells me that, after the boys ate, they would play—for polly-seeds. My Ma adds that one or two of 'em cheated.

A butcher, a drayman—after a hard day's work—might play a couple of deals.

A traveler, a merchant—might get a bit worldly. A doctor, a druggist—might try to show that he knew the usages of polite society.

These were special cases. Did not apply to you.

When did *you* play cards in Europe?

Christmas Eve—The peasants used to go by.

The drunken peasants used to go by.

The door was barred. Your windows shuttered.

You did no reading in any of your pious books. You sat; you hoped that there would be no trouble.

You sat. You played cards.

Hanukkah—You ate *lotkes*.

You were genial. Patriarchal. You sat in the bosom of the family. You sat. You played cards.

Otherwise?

No play.

If you did—you did it in secret. In a cellar. In a garret. On the outskirts of the town.

This was not so easy to arrange. Once, maybe two times in a year.

A player and a player's ways were a thing of mystery.

A good man got up early in the morning. To say the Midnight Prayer—He noticed that a lamp was lit in the window of a neighbor.

Maybe somebody is sick. They may need his help.

Out—into the street. Up—on his toes. He peered through the window.

He saw that they were playing cards.

Oh—how he was puzzled.

"Cards," he said. "Cards! Why should they get up so early just to play a game of cards?"

Now—on a holiday morning, a couple of young people might go walking in the country.

Fresh air. Breathe it deeply. Green grass. Flowers. Freedom. Freedom from the old folk's eyes.

In a *goyish* orchard, in a *goyish* garden—they pause. Sit down. They play—a few hands of cards.

There are several songs which tell of such a moment.

The moment went into a song. You, however, you turned back. Back to the crowded Jewish street.

You got back. Back into the tight harness—Jewish ways, Jewish rites, Jewish customs, Jewish traditions.

*Ich bin g'ven in gorten*

*Ich ub geshpilt . . . in korten. . .*

The moment went into a song. You—you became your father. Your father's father before him.

You played on Hanukkah. Played on Christmas Eve.

A player and a player's ways—they were a mystery to you.

NEW times. New winds.

Finally—a new land. A land where a game of cards was not a breach of the proprieties.

New land. Land of hope.

Work. All day. In a factory. Beds were not beds of roses. No, not as yet. Clothes were not silk and satin. No, not as yet. Streets were not cobbled with gold. No, not as yet. But they were able to play cards.

Did they have any alternative?

Work. A long day—Then, in the evening, they needed a diversion.

A date with a girl. A worker too. A dress-maker; a waist-maker.

Well—where would they go?

Partly as a matter of pride, partly as a matter of primness, she used to pay her own way. This was all to the good. But—where would they go?

Nowadays, things are different. It's a magical thing to be young. You take her to a movie. You eat chop suey. But, back in 1912, this Wonderland had not, as yet, descended on the nation.

As for the East Side. It was—to put it mildly—no center of amusements.

Well, then, let us suppose that you desire to be alone. This is no easier.

Her flat is full of the landlady's kids. Your flat is full of *your* landlady's kids.

Well—maybe—the Park.

There it is—Seward Park. It is the size of a yawn. The size of a potted plant—More people in it than trees—There's a sign:

KEEP OFF

GRASS.

The grass reads it—It keeps off.

Besides—There is your girl.

She is nice. An "idealist." She is sensible. She may even be pretty.

But—Has she any wiles? Any ways? Any whims?

Does she have any nonsense? Did she ever learn to dance the toe-dance of flirtation? Can she play with you like a magician with a coin?

She is prosy. A prosy posy.

If you go with a girl, it is "serious." It is serious.

You still need a diversion.

What'll you do? Drink?

Yodel? Bowl? Lift weights? Join the National Guard? Put a ship into a bottle?

Not for you. Not a part of your tradition.

Cards—

There is the solution.

**Y**ou do not need a special place. You do not need a lot of room.

You need little equipment, and the little is not expensive.

You begin it any time. You quit it any time. You have a whole evening. You play it the whole evening—You are going to a night school. To a meeting. To a lecture. You have a half hour—You play it a half hour.

As a matter of fact, if you have a date, bring your girl. She'll watch you.

Cards. A game of cards. Meets all the specifications. Has all of the virtues.

A game of cards requires no special training. There is no need to depend on a stranger. You do it with friends—On the other hand, if your friends are absent, you may do it with strangers.

You—you are no fool. You never play for more than you can afford. If you lose—if you lose—then you have paid a reasonable price for your diversion.

If you lose—if—

*Do you intend to lose?*

1912. They sit in my parents' restaurant. Sit in the little gas-lit room in front of the kitchen—The floor is strewn with saw-dust. A small window opens on a side-alley.

Tea. The glass is very thick. The tea is very hot—Blow it before you sip it.

A cube of sugar between your teeth—You suck the liquid through it.

Each of the players has two heads—a minimum of two—growing out of his shoulders. One of the heads is his own. The others belong to his kibitzers.

Each player, each of his kibitzers—each of them makes his calculations.

An ignoramus cannot do this. A peasant cannot do this.

You need Sense. Need Memory. Arithmetic. Mathematics.

Ah, this is Mind. This is Intellectuality.

The Player knits his brow. He plucks at his ear-lobe. He caresses his chin.

"If I do thi-is, he will do tha-at. If I do tha-at, then he will do thi-is."

His head goes to the right. His head leans to the left.

The eyes squint. Head is thrown back—Eyes stare up at the ceiling.

The fingers light on a card; shift to a different card. A grunt. Another grunt. Back—to the original card. Then—slowly, with dignity—you lift a third card. Lift it high—Pause—Then, with a bang, it is slapped on the table.

Ah, and the post-mortems.

You say you did right. Kibitzers say you did wrong. You say you did wrong—This is not going to save you—They say you did right.

Which is as it should be. A game of cards deserves the deepest analysis.

A three-handed pinochle will bring you the finest of post-mortems. One man buys the bid. The other two play as partners against him—When the buyer makes his bid, each of the partners knows that he has been ruined by his partner.

Eyes pop. Veins are like cords. Taut. Straining cords.

This is not a show of temper. It has a certain stature. It is something that is primal. It is something elemental.

For a moment or two, you are not able to speak. Then, by an effort of will, you manage to remind your partner that he is an idiot—You have to say it to him before he says it to you. But, at the same time, you are not able to rush it. For, before you speak, you have an interval of strangulated silence.

It is a thing that requires delicate timing.

"Idiot" has two pronunciations. A slow. A quick.

A slow: I-di-AUGHT.

While, if it is more than even you may bear—you give him the percussive, the quick: i-DYUT!

## II

WHEN I was six, my parents sold the restaurant. One year later, we moved up to the Bronx.

You always got a bigger place than your immediate family needed. There would be an extra bedroom or a couple of extra bedrooms. For the single friends or relations.

When a roomer got married, there would be a new roomer. Roomers always used to get married. And then—used to move into the same general area.

In the evenings, they would gather.

A bit of talk about the War. Then—the men started a game.

One began to go to movies.

One began to use more English—Some of the men started to buy a paper to read on the "El"—the paper's devotion to sports made my Uncle B. get curious—B. began to go to ball games.

Mrs. M. got a bargain. A second-hand victrola. Mr. M. discovered that he liked to listen to a record.

A little here. A little there—The horizon began to stretch.

Too late. Too late. The pattern had been set.

As a rule—they played cards.

Once, they had played because it was the only possible diversion. No longer true now.

The sword that had been forged in the fire of Necessity began to be converted into the bobby-pins of Habit.

Man—Man begins to die as soon as he is born. The player had not—as yet—risen to that plushy pinnacle which, in time, was to be his. Yet—look! You may see how his rise is part of his decline.

They were in business. Down-town. They would not get home till about half-past seven.

They had a feeling that their wives suspected that the last hour or so that they had spent in the place of business, they had spent in a game of cards. So—when they finished supper, the husbands did not begin to play. Taking out a little note-book, they

started to do sums. To mutter, cryptically, to themselves.

One heard enough to realize that the matter had to do with the Mystery of Business. You began to understand that they had to earn a living for the wife and the children. That having to earn a living was a grave responsibility. That this responsibility was a weight on their minds.

When they had established this, they laid away the little notebook.

And, as they played, you could see an aura. They were Men of Business. Men—preoccupied men—men who, somehow, had been able to find a moment of relaxation.

SUMMER. A proper man always tried to send his family up to the Catskills.

The farmer grew his own potatoes. His chickens laid his own eggs. Twice a day, you would get the cow's body-warm milk.

Room plus board cost eight dollars a week. Children—half price. Transportation was the big expense. So the husbands came out only about twice a season.

When they came—no cards. They used to take a dip in the creek. They used to go for a walk. Then, in the evening, they sat on the porch and, looking up at the sky, they used to make deep remarks about Nature.

NEAR the end of War I, things began to be different. The farms began to be hotels. The farmers became hotel-men.

Husbands came out on Friday. During the past week, the wives had grown friendly. Now—they introduced the husbands.

The husbands did not know how to handle one another. Each was in a different stage of his Americanization. The wives, however, seemed to want 'em to be friends.

A long, awkward stillness. Finally, a social genius remembered the Common Denominator.

They started a game.

Ah, indeed! This was a pleasant way in which to play.

They came each week-end. They came at the first possible moment. They left at the last possible second.

They arrived—looking pale. They put a table under a tree. They sat. They played cards. They left, just as pale as they had been when they arrived.

Any season was the season for cards. Summer—in the country—that was super-season.

A hotel got fancy. A neighboring hotel got fancier.

Additional buildings. With faces of stucco. They did a few things to the creek. The creek got swollen; turned into a lake. Near one end, tree stumps stand. Like beavers.

The mower has disappeared. They sold the cows; they got a four-piece band.

The men bought autos.

Rushed up to the Catskills.

Every other week, they'd have an accident. Every other trip, they'd get a ticket.

No more of this pallor. They let the sun give 'em a tan to show to the folks in the city—If it grew too sunny, they moved the table back into the shade.

The card player wore bright knickers. A gaudy sweater. Socks to match.

L. became a concessionaire. He gave the players the cards, the tables and chairs. Also—a pile of pebbles. These were to lay on the cards in case of a breeze.

He even seemed to own the trees. He reserved the finest shade for the people in the biggest game.

'24. '25.

The player was in his glory.

All was Vanity. All was Pomp. Yet, at the same time, you were able to see the road-signs pointing to decline and fall. As a matter of fact, the pomp, the vanity, were themselves road-signs of decline and fall.

L., from time to time, brought a plate of sandwiches. None the less—they would stop for the meals.

During meals, they were attentive to their wives. Then, having checked that none of the kids were lost, they got back into the game.

Before the evening meal, they used to change their clothes. After the evening meal, L. gave them brand new cards.

At about 10:30, Z. would take a furlough. With tiny, pigeon-toed steps, he would patter off to the casino—Z. used to dance one waltz with his Mrs.—A very good husband.

As a rule, however, nobody left the table.

There might be an Evening. Palestine. Or Relief. Even then, they would not go to the casino.

They would set aside a kitty. By the end of the sitting, there would be a tidy sum. This they would contribute to the Cause.

They had an air of having made a discovery about themselves.

"I," they seemed to realize—

"I am a nice fellow.

"I am a generous fellow.

"I am really a bit of an *all-rightnik*."

### III

**R**USSIA. Atom Bomb.

The player sits. Plays cards.

Anti-Semitism—is it rising? Why are such things happening in Zion?

He sits. Plays cards.

'29. There was a Crash. Then, in '33, the Nazi took power in Germany.

The player sits.

He has never regained his confidence. Never quite.

He has a recurring fever. There are intervals of vigor. But he knows that these are only the remissions of his illness—There are periods of hope. Yet he's always by the corner of yesterday's anxiety. He is always by the edge of the disquiets of tomorrow.

Once—long, long ago—a game filled a need in his life. Then, as we have seen, it lost its use.

It ceased to give off its own light. Still, for a number of years, it was able to shine.

It shone with a light reflected from the player himself. It shone in the light of the player's self-importance.

He sits.

He plays cards. Plays with his un-lit cards.

He was reared in a world where playing a game of cards was a thing that people frowned on.

Now that a game of cards has lost that which gave it a value—now that *he* has lost that which gave it a value—he reverts to disapproval.

He plays cards.

He disapproves—

**H**E LEAVES his business earlier. He has more leisure than he used to. He has the problem now of having to do something with his leisure.

So—from time to time—he opens a book.

Something about a Jewish book makes an English book seem wrong. Something about the English book makes the Jewish book seem wrong.

From time to time, he lets his wife make him take her to the theater.



Something about the Jewish stage makes the English stage seem wrong. Something about the English stage makes the Jewish stage seem wrong.

One of his eyes is his son's. One of his eyes is his father's.

He is so much of a green-horn that he cannot be a Yankee.

He is so much of a Yankee that he cannot be a green-horn.

He sits. He plays cards.

It is an outworn habit. None the less, it's a habit.

He sits. He plays cards.

He knows of nothing else to do.

The player has sired many sons. He has sired no successor.

Gaze at the modern generation. Look at him—the Young Prince.

He is a member of a frat. He wears two-tone shoes. He chews Bubble Gum. He listens to Superman. Also, to Information Please. He necks. He plays pin-ball. He dances the new Latin dance. He bets on basketball games. He utters the fashionable catch-word. He drives his old man's car. He twirls his watch-chain on the index-finger. He knows about the ballet. He has Miss Betty Grable's autograph. He is writing a brochure on the incunabula of Swing—

Ah, how lovely are the sweetmeats that Life gives him for his delectation!

He doesn't bother to play cards.

My generation—we, we are different. We—a dunner lot—we, we do play cards. But it is only one of several things we do. We, we are merely people who like a game of cards.

We, we are of another breed.

The player, the Perennial Player—he was *sui generis*.

Was. He is leaving the scene.

He is a member of a genus which is aging. Which is vanishing.

**I**t is his daughter who plays.

She doesn't do the house-work. She no longer suckles a baby.

As they sat—by the well, by the quern, the spinning-wheel—the women sit. They play gin.

Day out. Day in.

After Shirley has her hair-do. After Gladys has her manicure. After Sylvia, her massage. After Thelma's done her shopping for her

husband's second cousin who is having a Bar Mitzvah at the Waldorf.

After they have lunched at Schrafft's—

They sit. Play gin.

There are candies on the table—There are little sliver sandwiches.

As they sat by the spit, as they sat by the cauldron, they sit. They play cards.

It is a nice adjunct to chit-chat.

The old man—the Player—sits.

He uses a dainty score-pad. Uses a dainty, little pencil.

Once—a card was blue. Or red. Once—when cards belonged to men—there were two or three designs. Good. Manly. Honest. Geometrical designs.

Now—a card is Technicolored. A card is Joseph-colored. Pretty pictures on its back. A dog—with lush, feminine eyes. A naked girl, with greyhound grace; pert, Esquire-like breasts.

He sits. He plays cards.

He plays. For small stakes.

If he wins, he tries to feel good. If he loses—he tries to tell himself that it's just a couple of cents. It is just a game of cards.

He sits. His House of Cards is only a house of cards.

He is petulant. He nags his partners.

He is bored with what he's doing.

A man has to do something!

He sits.

He plays cards.

#### IV

**T**HIS essay has been written because of Mr. Isaac Rivkind.

Mr. Rivkind has been gathering data on the Jewish gambler as a cultural phenomenon. After twenty years, he now has enough material to fill three volumes. Yivo has issued the first—*The Fight Against Gambling Among Jews*. (New York, Yiddish Scientific Institute, 1947).

He covers the last five centuries, but he gives the most space to the recent decades in America. When he discusses this period, he shows the most feeling.

The author is far from being objective. *The Fight Against Gambling Among Jews*.—The very title of his book is a bit of special pleading.

Mr. Rivkind detests gambling. To be precise—it is not gambling; it is card playing that he detests.

He feels that cards have stunted the mental, moral, and spiritual stature of the American Jew. Because of this, he—properly—loathes them.

Mr. Rivkin is an eminent librarian. His book is a librarian's book. A compilation of source materials. These materials are not affected by Mr. Rivkind's feeling of animus. His citations speak for themselves. Mr. Rivkind's bias, however, gives the book a certain deficiency.

Mr. Rivkind sees his book as a study in cultural history. And, so long as he stays in East Europe, he is a cultural historian. He provides a setting. A soil. We see how the *why* stems out of the background; how the *how*, the *where*, the *when*, are related to the environment.

As soon as we gaze upon America, there is—suddenly—no context. Mr. Rivkind no longer bothers to build up the scene. He has some blistering citations. And, armed with these, he leaps into the fray.

Now, Mr. Rivkind—I have no objection to the fact that you do not admire the card player.

I like a prejudice. The more crabbed the prejudice, the better I like it.

Mr. Pinski disapproves of cards and card players. Mr. Liesin disapproves. Mr. Niger disapproves—You quote 'em with relish.

I enjoy these quotations. I enjoy your relish. The only thing I object to is the way that you put the player into a vacuum.

People—Mr. Rivkind.

People. Not straw men.

I have watched 'em for thirty-five years. I swear to you, they are people.

There were reasons why they played. They did not do it only to annoy you.

They were part of a time and a place.

Whenever time and place changed, there were changes in the way they played.

The study of how they played is the study of how they lived!

Please, Mr. Rivkind—do not misunderstand me.

This is not an attack.

You have written a learned book. There are indices. There are foot-notes. There are three appendices.

Only—as I read it, I felt that there was a little something that was missing.

This is my shy attempt to supply that little something. This is my humble try to give you the Hamlet for your drama.

# THE MONTH IN HISTORY

## Remodeling of Empire

THE imperialist network that had once fanned out of Western Europe and encircled the globe was falling apart. Every imperial power knew that it had to reshape its position in the world.

France and the Netherlands sought to temporize with the inevitable. But inevitability was on the side of Viet Nameese, North African, and Indonesian nationalism.

The British, grasping firmly the hand of history, sought to march along. It had long been written that India, the richest chattel in history, would be free. But it had not been written that, at the moment of its release, India would hail its departing master. Yet, on August 15, 1947, when the reign of British Viceroy began by Queen Victoria came to an end, the last of the Viceroy, Lord Louis Mountbatten, great grandson of Victoria, was cheered and praised throughout India. Few would have thought it possible.

Even fewer thought it possible that the British would leave Palestine under similarly happy circumstances. But here, too, events were on the march.

## The UNSCOP Report

THE plan for Palestine proposed by the majority of the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine envisaged political partition with economic union. Though the plan was only a recommendation to a body—the General Assembly—that could itself only make recommendations, it was a solid victory for advocates of a Jewish state. And though

SIDNEY HERTZBERG seeks in this regular department to provide a fair and impartial report of important trends in world affairs in their implications for Jews. Mr. Hertzberg has had long experience as news analyst and editor with *Current History*, *Time*, the *New York Times*, and *Common Sense*. Judgments expressed in these reports are his own and not necessarily the views of the editors.

the official summary of the report never once mentioned the Balfour Declaration, the majority plan in effect accepted the interpretation that it entitled the Jews to an independent state. For the Arabs, the plan meant total defeat. By clear implication, it rejected the Arab contention that the Balfour Declaration was an irrelevant unilateral statement and that immediate establishment of Palestine as an independent state was the only course.

## Political Division—Economic Union

What distinguished the UN Committee's plan from other partition proposals was the fact that it made political sovereignty conditional on economic union. This came under the heading of "practical" statesmanship. The Committee apparently felt that political union was as impossible as economic disunion. Hence the decision to reject both. While regretting the decision to establish independent states on the basis of religious nationalism, some observers welcomed the precedent of making independence conditional on economic union. It was a condition that could have been useful when Moslem states were carved out of India. It was an objective that states already independent were striving for with little success, except on a small scale, as in the case of Syria and Lebanon, in the so-called Benelux agreement involving Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxemburg, and in the similar agreement being worked out among the Scandinavian nations.

If the imposition of economic union on a partitioned Palestine was an abridgement of sovereignty in the old sense, it was one that more thoughtful advocates of partition would welcome. Development of the Jordan Valley, involving the cooperation of an economically united Palestine with surrounding countries, had long been regarded as essential. Without it there would be no hope for "a viable state in an adequate area of Palestine," no matter

how adequate the area might have been. In any case, sovereignty was largely a 20th-century myth for pint-sized nations such as Palestine. The imposition of economic union on political sovereignty was simply a recognition of reality.

### The Area of Unanimity

The specific proposals were preceded by a series of unanimous recommendations laying down broad principles.

The first point on which the Committee agreed was that the old League of Nations mandate for Palestine should be "terminated at the earliest practicable date." Pending the achievement of independence, the administering authority "shall be responsible to the United Nations." The report did not specify which UN body should exercise this control. The Security Council had no authority or machinery to act in this capacity. The General Assembly could assume control only through the Trusteeship Council, which would involve the complicated process of writing a trusteeship agreement, in which several vital steps were still the subject of disagreement.

Independence, the Committee also agreed, should be granted "at the earliest practicable date." But in this recommendation the Committee used a carefully chosen and highly significant preposition. It was not independence "for" Palestine, or the independence "of" Palestine. The Committee recommended independence "in" Palestine. Under this all-inclusive preposition, the majority of the Committee could recommend partition with economic union, and the minority a federal state. Theoretically, independence "in" Palestine could have meant half-a-dozen independent states, or indeed independence for each individual inhabitant under a system of anarchy. At any rate, independence "in" involved an interesting extension of the principle of the self-determination of peoples.

But if independence "in" seemed to enlarge the meaning of self-determination quantitatively by making political sovereignty available to everybody who sought it with sufficient persistence, other unanimous Committee recommendations served to introduce qualitative restrictions.

### Limitations on Self-Determination

"It shall be a prior condition to the grant-

ing of independence," the Committee agreed, "that the political structure of the new state or states, including its constitution or other fundamental law, shall be basically democratic, i.e., representative in character." The constitution shall also contain "guarantees of essential human rights and fundamental freedoms and safeguards to protect the rights and interests of minorities."

Another "prior condition to independence" shall be "the incorporation in the constitution of the basic principles of the Charter of the United Nations, including the obligation to settle international disputes by peaceful means and to refrain in international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state. . . ."

In making these conditions the Committee obviously had in mind the fact that any partition would still leave minorities and would incubate irridentist movements. They were conditions to which no objection could be raised. Many national constitutions, including those under which some of the bloodiest autocracies in the world operated, contained provisions of this kind. The significant thing was that self-determination, under these conditions, was not automatic, involving the right of peoples to misgovern themselves in their own way. It was instead to be granted conditionally by an international body, some of whose members, as a matter of fact, flagrantly violated these conditions in their own constitutions and others of which did not even adhere to them verbally. In any case, the principle of self-determination was contracted.

The unanimous recommendations of the Committee referred to economic unity in the following terms: "It shall be accepted as a cardinal principal that the preservation of the economic unity of Palestine is indispensable to the life and development of the country and its peoples." The majority report designated economic collaboration as a precondition of independence for the partitioned areas. This emphasis on economic unity, born out of a realization that no partitioned state in Palestine could be viable, introduced an entirely new element in the development of self-determination. If existing sovereign states found economic collaboration desirable though difficult, this was no reason for not imposing it on new states.



The unanimous recommendations included the usual guarantees concerning protection of and access to holy places, protection of the rights of religious communities, and the impartial settlement of religious disputes. There was also an appeal to end violence.

### Immigration and the "Jewish Problem"

The only unanimous recommendation on immigration was one urging the General Assembly to "undertake immediately the initiation and execution of an international arrangement whereby the problem of the distressed European Jews . . . will be dealt with as a matter of extreme urgency for the alleviation of their plight and of the Palestine problem."

Since, on the basis of this unanimous statement, one of the purposes of international action on displaced Jews was to relieve pressure in Palestine by resettling Jews elsewhere, the Committee obviously did not think of Palestine as the place where Jews could go as of right or as the sole answer to the problem of the displaced Jew.

Nevertheless, two members of the Committee dissented from another recommendation which read as follows:

"In the appraisal of the Palestine question it should be accepted as incontrovertible that any solution for Palestine cannot be considered as a solution of the Jewish problem in general."

If followers of Theodor Herzl got the Jewish state out of the Committee's recommendations, they would no doubt cheerfully overlook this disclaimer of intent.

### The Majority Plan

The majority proposal of the UN Committee was supported by Canada, Czechoslovakia, Guatemala, the Netherlands, Peru, Sweden, and Uruguay. The minority plan for a federal state was supported by India, Iran, and Yugoslavia. Australia refrained from supporting either plan. The Australian member was reported to feel that if the degree of cooperation envisaged in either plan were really possible, there was no need for either partition or federalization.

The UN Committee majority proposed independent Jewish and Arab states, specifically describing them as "Jewish" and "Arab," after a two-year transitional period beginning September 1, 1947. The city of

Jerusalem would be placed under UN trusteeship.

The territory granted to the Jews, a good half of Palestine, included eastern Galilee, the Esdraelon plain, most of the coastal plain, and the whole of the Beersheba sub-district, which included the Negev. The port of Jaffa, an almost wholly Arab city immediately south of Tel Aviv, was included in the Jewish area, as was the port of Haifa.

The Arab state would consist of three non-contiguous areas: 1) western Galilee; 2) the hill country of Samaria and Judea with the Jordan River and the northern part of the Dead Sea as the eastern boundary; 3) a narrow coastal strip from Isdud to the Egyptian frontier.

It was estimated that the Jewish state would contain 500,000 Jews and 416,000 Arabs; and the Arab state would contain 715,000 Arabs and 8,000 Jews. The internationally controlled Jerusalem district would contain 106,000 Arabs and 100,000 Jews. Approximately one-third of Palestine's Arabs would become a minority in the projected Jewish state.

During the transitional period, the Committee recommended that Britain carry on the administration of Palestine "under the auspices of the United Nations and on such conditions and under such supervision as the United Kingdom and the United Nations may agree upon." This proviso that Britain agree to the conditions of supervision was undoubtedly made in view of Britain's repeated insistence that it could not carry out a solution that it regarded as unjust or that placed an unbearable burden upon its resources. In addition, the normal operations of the UN trusteeship system gave the trustee power a veto over the provisions of the trusteeship agreement. "If so desired," the Committee added, "the administration will be carried on with the assistance of one or more members of the United Nations." This was obviously an invitation to the United States, though it was presumably equally open to the Soviet Union.

During the transitional period, the proposed Jewish state would be allowed to admit 150,000 Jewish immigrants at a uniform monthly rate, with the Jewish Agency responsible for their selection, transportation, and care. Under the Grady-Morrison federalization plan of a year earlier, 100,000 immi-

grants would have been admitted over a two-year period. "Should the transitional period continue for more than two years," the Committee said, "immigration shall be allowed at the rate of 60,000 per year."

Land purchase restrictions under the 1939 White Paper would be eliminated immediately within the borders of the proposed Jewish state.

### **Economic Union**

The report was categorical on the subject of economic collaboration between the two states. "Before, however, their independence can be recognized," the report said, "they must . . . sign a treaty by which a system of economic collaboration is established and the economic union of Palestine is created."

Constituent assemblies in the two states would appoint provisional governments empowered to sign the treaty of economic union. "On making the declaration [protecting minorities] and signing the treaty of economic union by either state, its independence as a sovereign state shall be recognized," the report recommended. "If only one state fulfills these conditions, the General Assembly of the United Nations shall take such action as it may deem proper. Pending such action, the regime of economic union shall apply."

This somewhat ambiguous recommendation left some crucial questions unanswered. Presumably, if a completed economic treaty were lying on the green baize table and one state signed it, that state would become independent, the treaty would become operative, and its provisions would be carried out within the borders of the recalcitrant and not-yet-independent state by the United Nations, using, if necessary, force, i.e., British soldiers. But what if one potential state refused to join in writing a treaty? Would the UN write it—alone or with the other state? What if one state insisted that the treaty be limited in time? What if one state deliberately protracted the negotiations so that there would never be a final treaty to sign? The provision whereby one state could be granted independence after signing certain documents was obviously designed to overcome Arab intransigence. But Arab intransigence was certain to begin long before there were documents to sign.

The Committee also recommended the establishment of a presumably permanent

joint economic board consisting of three representatives of each of the two states and three foreign members appointed by the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations. Its function would be to "organize and administer the objectives of the economic union." In the crucial function of economic development, then, the UN would have the last word. In effect, what was being proposed was a permanent UN stewardship over Palestine, a stewardship that would exert strong influence throughout the whole area.

If a treaty of economic union ever got written, its terms would have to be adjusted to the amount of capital available for economic development. Capital was a commodity available only in the United States, whether it was given as a grant by Congress, a loan through the Export-Import Bank, or an investment by the World Bank, which was largely financed by the United States.

The Committee specified that the objectives of economic union were to be a customs union, common currency, operation in the common interest of railways, interstate highways, communications, and the ports of Haifa and Jaffa. "It shall also," the report continued, "promote joint economic development especially in respect of irrigation, land reclamation, and soil conservation."

Surplus revenue from customs and other common services would be divided equally between the two states after deducting not less than five and not more than ten per cent for Jerusalem, which would be included in the economic union.

### **Organs of Government**

Constitutions for the two states would be written by constituent assemblies elected by all persons over twenty years of age who were: "(1) Palestinian citizens residing in that state and (2) Arabs and Jews residing in the state, although not Palestinian citizens, who, before voting, have signed a notice of intention to become citizens of such a state."

The constitution for each state must set up a legislative body elected by universal suffrage and the secret ballot on the basis of proportional representation. The executive body would be responsible to the legislature. Guarantees of human rights must be written into the constitution and freedom of transit must be granted for all residents.

All inhabitants of Palestine would become citizens of the partitioned state in which they resided. Persons over eighteen years of age would have the right to change citizenship to the other state within one year of independence. In Jerusalem, however, Arabs would be allowed to become citizens of the Arab state only, and Jews only of the Jewish state.

### Government of Jerusalem

After the transitional period, the Jerusalem enclave would be demilitarized and placed under the international trusteeship system with the UN itself as the administering authority.

The governor of the city would be appointed by the Trusteeship Council of the UN and he would be neither an Arab nor a Jew, nor would he be a citizen of the Palestinian states nor, at the time of his appointment, a resident of Jerusalem.

Jerusalem would have a special police force whose members would be neither Arabs nor Jews and would be recruited outside Palestine.

### Minority Report: The Federal State

The UN Committee's minority of India, Iran, and Yugoslavia recommended "an independent federal state" after a transitional period of not more than three years. The administering authority during the transition would be determined by the General Assembly.

This independent state, the minority said, "shall comprise an Arab state and a Jewish state," with Jerusalem as its capital. The use of the term "state" in this connection led some observers to minimize the differences between the two plans. But the differences were basic because the powers of the Arab and Jewish "states" within the "federal state" were confined to local self-government in such matters as education, commercial licenses, "the right of residence," social services, interstate migration, punishment of crime, etc.

Immigration into the Jewish "state," during the transitional period, would be determined by economic absorptive capacity, "having due regard for the rights of the existing population within that state and their anticipated natural rate of increase." Economic absorptive capacity would be de-

termined by an international commission composed of three Arab, three Jewish, and three UN representatives. After the transitional period this commission would be disbanded and immigration would be controlled by the federal government of the new Palestinian state.

A constitution would be written by a popularly elected constituent assembly. All citizens of Palestine and all Arabs and Jews resident in Palestine who declared their intention of becoming citizens not less than three months before the election would vote for members of the constituent assembly.

The constitution would give the federal government full authority with regard to national defense, foreign relations, immigration, currency, taxation for federal purposes, transport, and communications.

The federal legislative body would have two chambers. Election to one would be on the basis of proportional representation of the population as a whole. Election to the other would be on the basis of equal representation of the Arab and Jewish citizens of Palestine. Legislation would require majority votes in both chambers. "In the event of disagreement between the two chambers, the issue shall be submitted to an arbitral body of five members, including not less than two Arabs and two Jews."

The head of state would be elected by a majority vote of both chambers. A deputy head of state would be elected who would be a representative of the other community. A federal court, of unspecified size, elected by both chambers, would include "not less than four Arabs and three Jews," and would be "the final court of appeals regarding constitutional matters."

Guarantees of human rights would be written into the constitution. There would be a single Palestinian nationality and citizenship, but the constitution would "provide for equitable participation of representatives of both communities in delegations to international conferences."

The supervision and protection of holy places would be under a permanent international body composed of three members designated by the UN and one representative each of the various religious faiths.

The Arab area, under the minority plan, was larger than under the majority plan, and included Jaffa.



### The Reactions

Arab spokesmen who were willing to comment on the UN Committee's majority proposal were, of course, unqualifiedly opposed. Abdul Rahman Azzam Pasha, secretary general of the Arab League, predicted that the General Assembly would not adopt it. Emile Ghoury, speaking for the Palestine Arab Higher Committee, said, "Arabs will fight the recommendations with all their might and the help of the Arab States."

Zionists managed to restrain their enthusiasm. The most authoritative comment came from the Zionist General Council (Actions Committee), highest Zionist body between World Zionist Congresses, which was meeting in Switzerland. In a resolution adopted by a vote of sixty-one to sixteen, the Council described the report as "an earnest effort to arrive at practicable solution of the Palestine problem."

"The Council notes with satisfaction" that the majority report recommended "the early establishment of a sovereign Jewish state." The Council also noted that the state proposed would constitute "a minor part of the territory originally promised to the Jewish people on the basis of its historic rights," but it did not suggest that the report be rejected for this reason, nor did it say it would ask for more. It did reaffirm its belief that "Palestine alone can solve the problem of the national homelessness of the Jewish people."

Voting against the resolution were the right-wing Revisionists, and the left-wing Ahdut Avoda and Hashomer Hatzair. The Revisionists stuck to their demand—as did the terrorist groups—that the Jewish state include both sides of the Jordan; that is, Transjordan, as well as Palestine. Ahdut Avoda demanded a unitary Jewish state; the Hashomer Hatzair had always opposed partition in favor of a bi-national Arab-Jewish state.

The terrorist groups in Palestine—the Sternists and the Irgun Zvai Leumi—denounced the report. "We will continue to fight for an undivided Palestine," the Stern Gang announced. "We invite all freedom-loving nations to fight with us." Denying reports that it favored the majority proposal, an Irgun broadcaster said: "We will fight, and call on all loyal sons of our people to fight with us, against any partition plan."

There was no official reaction from the

British. Press response generally favored the report, and favored British acceptance, if that could reduce Britain's burden of foreign obligations, but at least two influential papers considered it unjust to the Arabs. The liberal *Manchester Guardian*, which had in recent months cooled in its long support of Zionist aims, said:

"It is a practical, human, and final, but it would be impractical to say that it is an impartial solution. . . . It is to be understood from the report that the Jews will not only get the more fertile part of Palestine, but a bigger area than suggested by the Peel [1937] report."

"When the United Nations Assembly meets, we should use our knowledge and experience to try to improve the somewhat sketchy recommendations of the Palestine committee in the interests of both Jews and Arabs. . . . We should express our willingness to do our utmost to enforce the decisions of the Assembly, though we should certainly insist on help from other UN members."

"If we make any condition, it should be this, that we cannot undertake to impose any decision of the United Nations which might involve us in open war with either the Arabs or Jews. If it comes to that, we should better leave at once."

The *Economist* wrote:

"Generally speaking, the twelve recommendations—the principles on which the report is based—can reasonably be accepted with perhaps a few minor reservations. But the plans for partition—the specific application of the principles—are on a different footing."

"With partition itself there can be no quarrel. . . . But the particular plan of partition put forward by the United Nations committee is both unjust and unworkable. It is unjust because far too much of Palestine's wealth and territory has been conceded to the Zionists. . . . It is unworkable because of the distribution of population between the two states, each of which would consist of three non-contiguous areas."

As for the United States, there was no official reaction. And it was the United States that, many thought, would in the end have the deciding voice in the Assembly's final recommendation. The policy of the Soviet Union in the matter also remained unknown.

SIDNEY HERTZBERG



# CEDARS OF LEBANON

## FROM THE LAND OF SHEBA

### *Tales of the Jews of Yemen*

THESE folk tales and legends from Yemen—the land known in Biblical times as Sheba—are a unique part of Jewish cultural history. Yemen is a fertile section of southwest Arabia, and the Yemenite Jews are the oldest Jewish community in the world. (According to one legend, Jews settled in Yemen immediately after the destruction of the First Temple in 586 B.C.E.) Despite their remoteness, the Yemenite Jews were influenced by, and contributed to, the mainstream of Jewish cultural development: the Aggadic Midrashim (fanciful commentaries on the Talmud), the Halachah (traditional law), the Cabala, etc. Until the present day, they have lived under a theocratic system based upon the Talmud.

For the most part, the Yemenite Jews are impoverished craftsmen. Their political position, too, is extremely precarious, because Yemen is governed by fanatical Islamic sects. When, in the 12th century, the Jews suffered especially severe persecution, Maimonides wrote

his famous consolatory *Iggeret Teman* (Epistle of Yemen), exhorting them to remain true to their faith. This letter has had a lasting effect upon Yemenite Jewry, and the name of Maimonides was included in the Kaddish prayer. And it was as a result of this continuing persecution that the Yemenite Jews became probably the most ardent Zionists in the world.

These tales have been collected and annotated by S. D. Goitein of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and translated by Christopher Fremantle. They are taken from the volume, *From the Land of Sheba: Tales of the Jews of Yemen*, which is to be published by Schocken Books at the beginning of October, and they appear here by permission of the publisher. *From the Land of Sheba* will be the third volume in the Schocken Library, "a series of volumes planned toward the building up of a comprehensive home library devoted to outstanding expressions of Jewish thought and Jewish experience, ancient and modern."—Ed.

#### How It Came About That Their Power Was Broken

AT that time the dwellers in the land were pagans, poor in understanding and in state. They could not thrive in the face of the wisdom and wealth of the Jews. All of the community were punctiliously exact in their dealings with the pagans as regards mine and thine, as it is said: "The remnant of Israel shall not do iniquity, nor speak lies, neither shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth."

Once it so happened that a pagan was driven out of Palestine to Yemen. There the

heathen asked him what they should do to gain mastery over the Jews. Sly as Balaam, he replied thus: "The God of these people loves justice and hates robbery; tempt them so that they turn aside from their straight path, then their God will abandon them."

At that time Jewish skill in the silversmith's art was famous and unequalled. So the pagan went to a silversmith, bringing him some bars of silver, and asked him to make a pendent out of them. Before his eyes the silversmith weighed up the bars and set to work. When the pagan came back to collect the pendent, the silversmith wanted

to weigh the ornament in order to show the customer that not an ounce had been lost. But he said, "Who will doubt the honor of a Jew?" Subsequently all the pagans did as he had done; they never allowed the ornaments to be weighed, and asked no questions about the unused silver.

There were found, for our sins, a few wretched creatures who fell into this trap, and misused the trust placed in them. Thus the power of the Jews declined, as it is said: "One sinner destroyeth much good," and from now on the heathen began to master them.

### Flight to Jerusalem

ONCE Shalom Shar'abi went to the city of the Muslims to sell cloth. There the wife of a great one saw him from her window and fell in love with him, for his face was made beautiful with the light of the Torah. She had him brought up to her upper room, there to show his cloths, but directly they were alone she shut the door and declared her desire. Mori Shalom [in Yemen a rabbi is called a "mori"] acted as though he were ready to do her will, proposing that they should go up to the roof together where they could be alone to their hearts' delight. This he did because the windows were too narrow to allow a man to pass through them; and so, as soon as they had reached the roof, having first made a great vow in case he would remain alive, he threw himself down into the courtyard. Although the roof was five stories high he escaped unharmed, and made his way on foot towards Jerusalem. On arrival there he sat down modestly in a corner of the Bet-El synagogue, but was soon recognized as the great holy man he was, and his name lives to this day in Jerusalem as the founder of the brotherhood which in this synagogue carries on, in Kabbalistic fashion, their ecstatic practice of prayer.

### Yih'ya Tabib

YIH'YA TABIB, or Sekharya Harofe, as he is called in Hebrew, the author of the Midrash *Hahefes*, was fabulously learned. After he had mastered all that was to be learned in Yemen, he traveled, with great privation and suffering, to the most distant part of India, where seven doctors lived

who knew more medicine than any doctor in the world. But they were at great pains to disclose nothing of their art to anyone. So Yih'ya employed a ruse. He knocked at the door of their house, and when they opened it to him, he made it clear to them by signs that he was deaf and dumb and wished to be their servant. They accepted him gladly, taking him for a deaf-mute, and thus he stayed with them for twelve years. He examined each sick person who came to the seven doctors, in advance, so that he knew what was the matter with him, and then, when they prescribed the remedy, he came to know the wonderful methods which these Indian doctors used.

One day a seriously ill man was brought in. Yih'ya examined him and found that only one artery was still working. When the seven doctors saw the sick man, his case appeared to them to be hopeless, and they wanted to give him a powder to spare him the torments of death. Yih'ya, however, sprang from his place and cried out. "What are you doing? Don't you see that there is still one artery working in him?" and showed them the place. The doctors were not a little astonished, first, that the supposed deaf-mute could speak, and further, that he knew more about medicine than they did. They prescribed the necessary remedy for the sick man and allowed him to be taken home. Then they said to Yih'ya, "Truly, you deserve death, for you have mocked our beards and stolen our learning. But first tell us about yourself."

Yih'ya said, "I am from Yemen, and in our land many sick people who might be cured die because nobody knows the right treatments. Now, if it is your wish, I will never again treat a sick person and will let them all die, but the responsibility shall fall on you." Because the doctors saw his intentions were good, they said to him, "As we have taught you till now against our will, from now on we will teach you of our own free will. For really you do not know anything as yet; when you have passed the examination which we shall set you, we shall give you a certificate." Each of the seven doctors had, as it happened, some disability—one was lame, another deaf, and so on. Yih'ya succeeded in curing them all, so they gave him the right to practice, and he returned to Yemen,

where he became personal physician to the Imam.

One day, the son of the Imam was found murdered in the forecourt of the synagogue. It was the act of men who were the enemies both of the Imam and the Jews. The Imam had all the Jews imprisoned and said to Yih'ya Tabib, "If you don't deliver up the murderer within three days, all the Jews shall be burnt. For since the body of my son was found in your synagogue, it is clear that one of you killed him." Yih'ya had the corpse taken and washed in warm water, then he took a quill pen which had written only the Torah, and wrote on the forehead of the dead man the first, middle, and last letters of the alphabet: *E Me T*, which signifies: "Truth." Immediately the dead man began to speak and point out the real murderers by name. The Imam embraced his son and thanked Yih'ya for recalling him to life. But Yih'ya said, "To do that, I have no permission," and wiped away the first letter leaving *Me T*, which signifies: "Dead," and the youth was again dead and speechless as before.

The Imam took vengeance on his enemies, the murderers, but let the Jews go free, and from that time on nobody was ever allowed to raise an accusation before him without proof.

#### A Prayer for Rain

It was said of Ibrahim, brother of Yih'ya Salih, who was author of the *Ez Haiyim* [regarded in Yemen as canonical], that he wanted to impose his will upon all, and even upon God. Once, when there was a drought in the country, the whole community, as they were wont to do in such cases, took the Torah scrolls to the cemetery to pray for rain. Their prayers were not heard, however, and they returned to the town in shame. As they were taking the scrolls of the Torah back into the synagogue, Ibrahim stopped them, took up his stand in the forecourt of the synagogue, and opening the Torah at a desk which was brought there, cried out, "I will not stir from this place until rain comes." He had scarcely spoken when a severe hailstorm descended. Everyone fell to the ground, giving thanks to God for the wondrous answer; but the first hailstone, falling from heaven, struck out

Ibrahim's right eye, and he wasted away because of it and died.

#### Mohammed's Letter of Protection

Islamic religious law, which is based on the Koran and on sayings attributed to Mohammed, is the law of the realm in Yemen, and thus it also defines the legal position of the Jews. It is not surprising, therefore, that the Jews have expressed their desire for the safeguarding or betterment of their position in the form of a letter of protection ascribed to Mohammed. This letter—written, naturally, in Hebrew characters—was widely known among the Yemenites, and is ultimately traced back to an actual document of Mohammed's which already in the early Middle Ages had been completely altered. In its present form it reflects Yemenite social conditions.

THIS is the letter of protection which the prophet Mohammed, may peace and mercy and God's blessing be with him, caused to be written for the children of Israel.

When the heathens were pressing hard against the prophet, may peace be with him, the children of Israel came to him, saying, "We are with you and on your side; we will fight against the unbelievers until you have peace with them." And thus they did, fighting all week until at noon on Friday the prophet said to them, "Children of Israel, go and keep your Sabbath. With God's help we will fight off the enemy alone, though it be hard." But the children of Israel answered, "Prophet of God, dearer to us than life or possessions, for us there is no Sabbath whilst you have no peace." So they joined battle again. The sun went down and the children of Israel desecrated the Sabbath, fighting on until they had conquered the heathen. When the prophet heard of this, his joy was great, and he said, "Men of Israel, by God's grace I will reward you for your goodness and for all time give you my protection and my vow, until the Day of Resurrection."

To his companions the prophet said, "Allah has bidden me wed Safiya, a maiden of the children of Israel; what say you?" "Prophet of Allah," replied his companions, "what you do is done; prophecy and true wisdom are yours." So it was that the prophet married Safiya.

Then he called all his companions together and the elders and scribes as well as Abdullah ibn Salam, the Jewish sage,

and in their presence ordered his son-in-law, Ali, to write the letter of protection. Ali took some paper and a quill and wrote the following exactly as the prophet dictated it to him:

"In the name of God, the merciful, the all-compassionate. Listen and hear, all Muslims and believers, both absent and present. Let the children of Israel return to their villages and their strongholds, and dwell in them, they and all their generations to come. God, praised be He, and the Muslims and believers warrant for their safety, for as comrades under my protection, I accepted them and I am answerable for them. Let no insults, abuse, accusations, and hostile acts take place in any town, village, or market place of Muslims and true believers. Illegal levies, fines, and special taxes of any kind may not be demanded of them; their fields and vineyards and palm groves are free of tithe; they have only to pay the head tax, and the rich who ride on horseback must pay three pieces of silver a year.\* The poor who have only food for a month and clothing for a year are to pay what they can afford. A man of trust from among them is to collect the head tax.

"Whoever takes anything from the children of Israel unjustly; though it is no greater in weight than an ant, shall not have the blessing of God, and I will testify against him on the Day of Resurrection. The protected comrades are not forbidden to enter the mosque, the tombs of the saints, and the Koran schools.† They are not to be prevented from riding on horseback. They are to wear a girdle by which they may be recognized as protected comrades, and none shall harm them.

"They must not change their religion for any other; they must not desecrate the Sabbath by any kind of work; they must not be disturbed in reading the Torah which was revealed through Moses, peace be with him, who spoke with God on Mount Sinai; neither must they be disturbed at their prayers in the synagogues, nor when they

\* The Jews in Yemen, however, are forbidden to ride on horseback, and are not even allowed to ride on donkeys.

† The Koran schools in small towns serve as lodging houses and in a few less fanatical districts they are open to the Jews, who, as itinerant craftsmen, often spend a week at a time in purely Arab localities.

are attending the schools and baths, nor when preparing intoxicating liquor for their own use.

"This is their reward because they, the children of Israel, fought for me and desecrated the Sabbath on my account. I call Allah to witness, O Muslims and true believers, that you may watch over and preserve my letter of protection and seal.

"Given on the twentieth day of Ramadan in the year nine. Such and such were witnesses. Ali wrote it."

### How Maimuni Conquered His Adversary or Imagination Kills

A favorite Arabic catchword runs: "Today you are going to get something to drink, you *Kammun*!" However, the *Kammun* (Arabic for the caraway plant) is never watered; the meaning, therefore, is: You will never get anything. The following story is a Midrash based upon this catchword, a form of story which is very popular with the Yemenites.

**R**ABBI Moshe ben Maimon, apart from his splendid gifts as teacher of the Law and master of philosophy, was also an outstanding doctor. His reputation in this science was so great that the Sultan of Egypt made him his personal physician. Many doctors begrudged him this high position, and with all their might sought to remove him from his exalted place. One doctor among them, named *Kammun*, which means "caraway," had the best prospect, having many influential friends at court. These were soon aware that the Sultan was dependent on Rabbi Moshe and placed unbounded confidence in him. They suggested that he should take *Kammun* as a second personal physician, in order that the care of the royal health might not be left to the wisdom of a single man and especially to a Jew. "Two personal physicians are no use," asserted the Sultan, "but since you tell me so much about *Kammun* I will put both of them to the test, and whoever proves himself the greater master of his profession shall be my personal physician." Soon afterwards, the Sultan summoned the two of them and when they had come before him, he said, turning to *Kammun* as he did so: "They have told me that you are an even greater physician than Maimuni; but I do not want to rely on the statements of others, but to



make trial of your ability for myself. I will set you a task whose accomplishment will give me a clear proof of the superiority of the victor. You shall each try to poison the other, and whoever succeeds in remaining alive through wisely chosen antidotes shall be my personal physician."

When Kammun heard these words he was delighted, because he was in fact a notorious poisoner, and many highly placed persons had been put out of the way through his medicines without the cause ever becoming known. But Rabbi Moshe ben Maimon was deeply grieved, for he was now in the terrible position of either committing murder or being killed. Soon Kammun, experienced in such matters, had found means to get poison mixed with the food which Rabbi Moshe ate. But Rabbi Moshe knew how to render each poison harmless by an antidote; and everyone was astonished each day when he appeared at court to find him still alive and in blooming health. But what did Rabbi Moshe do in order to free himself from Kammun? Nothing whatsoever. He would not have the blood of another on his hands, in spite of the sage who had said: If any man goes about to kill you, forestall him by killing him.

Only, when he saw Kammun, as he daily did at court, he said to him in passing, "Today you will get the poison to drink, Kammun; today you are going to get something to drink!" Kammun carefully analyzed all the food and drink that he took, but could discover no trace of poison in them. The people at court constantly asked him, "What has Maimuni given you today?" He was ashamed to show his ignorance, and said each time, "He put this and that in my food, and I have taken this and that as antidote." Now, as he could not discover the nature of the poison in question, he

feared that it was a creeping, slow-working substance, and soon refrained from eating any food at all. The only thing he took was some milk, from a cow that was milked before his eyes. He became paler and weaker day by day, while Maimuni, with his health intact, went about his business.

One day, while holding a half-empty jar of milk in his hand, he encountered Maimuni in one of the anterooms of the Sultan's palace. Maimuni immediately said to him, "Now you are drinking it, Kammun!" This frightened him to death, for he could think nothing else than that he had taken the deadly poison. He scarcely had the strength to place the jar on the table; then he fell to the ground and passed away.

The news of it spread like wind through the town, and soon the doctors and alchemists gathered together to investigate the drink with which Maimuni had done the renowned poisoner to death. But Maimuni had a suckling child brought in and, in front of all, gave it the rest of the milk, and behold, nothing in the slightest happened to the child! There was no end to their astonishment, and everyone was convinced that Maimuni had overcome his enemy by sorcery.

But Maimuni answered, "There is no sorcery in Jacob, and no black art in Israel, but there is a little proverb that even the galley slave on the ship knows, and with this counsel I mastered my adversary." Thereupon he told them the whole story, and so all came to know that Kammun died of nothing but unfounded fears, as the proverb says: "Imagination kills." The Sultan was greatly pleased at the wisdom of his personal physician and rewarded him royally, saying, "Now I know that you are truly a great doctor, because you heal not only the body but the soul as well."

# THE STUDY OF MAN

## IS THE DEPRESSION INEVITABLE?

### *America's Industrial Potential Under Capitalism*

BEN B. SELIGMAN

**M**OST American economists—60 per cent, if we are to believe a recent *Business Week* survey—think that a serious economic collapse will take place within the next five years, and a large proportion of these believe the collapse unavoidable.

Virtually all statistical data agree that the trend is toward lower production and higher unemployment. They show declining purchasing power, rising living costs, decreased savings, and intensified monopoly controls; they show increases in corporate profits while wages are going down. The tremendous expansion in plant facilities which occurred last year appears to have spent its force; inventories are rapidly being sold; government spending is under curtailment; and construction, the one industry that everyone agrees can support prosperity, is almost non-existent. These are the omens that presage the coming storm.

Not entirely blind to these signs, businessmen in their public pronouncements defy reality with a kind of forced optimism. Typical of this attitude were the prognoses offered by several business counselors at the annual conference of the American Economic Association, in January 1947. Ragnar D. Naess, senior partner in the Wall Street firm of Naess and Cummings, read a paper on "The Outlook for Incomes and Spending" (*Papers and Proceedings of the American Economic Association*,

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May 1947). On the one hand, Mr. Naess stated that every economic indicator reads prosperity; on the other hand, he conceded that there was widespread apprehension concerning the level of national income and economic activity in the immediate future. He argued that the intense demand on the part of industry for new plant and equipment, a demand reflected by a 75 per cent increase over 1941 in expenditures for producers' durable equipment, provided the necessary leverage for prosperity. Yet he admitted that "... it is doubtful that the current rate will increase to any degree. Orders in this broad field of activity are no longer increasing and, if anything, are showing a declining tendency."

Neither foreign trade nor inventory accumulation promised much in the way of economic stimulus; political barriers interfered with the first, and current inventory increases were due largely to inflated prices. While it is true that inventory increases create purchasing power—since they mean more employment and income without a corresponding increase in available consumer goods on the market—it is obvious that they can only be a temporary and artificial spur.

It is this problem of purchasing power that is central to the entire question of boom or bust. Mr. Naess acknowledged that, at prevailing prices, there still remained a sizable deficiency in individual income as measured against consumer-goods industries current output. In fact, this deficiency was great enough to engender a glut in many consumer-goods markets. Businessmen had recognized this disparity by marking down the prices of many of the so-called soft goods. Said Mr. Naess: "It is clear that the present trends cannot last long before a more

general downward movement will occur. It is unlikely that income payments to individuals will increase enough to enable the market to absorb the increasing flow of consumer goods at present prices, even with a larger than normal rate of spending out of income, somewhat lower personal income taxes, and a continuation of the rising scale of the use of consumer credit."

**T**HERE is no question that we do possess the technical means and the physical ability to assure a plenitude of goods for all, according to the Twentieth Century Fund's impressive and encyclopedic study, *America's Needs and Resources* (1947). On the assumption that our economic system can function at high levels, J. Frederic Dewhurst, the Fund's economist and director of this survey, predicts that the American people will have more goods and services in the future than were available during the best war years. The output of American industry in 1944, he shows, was twenty-seven times greater than in 1850, when a labor force one-eighth the present size worked seventy hours a week, and has increased the income of each individual more than fourfold. If this growth continues, the Fund concludes, we should be able to increase the nation's output to 177 billion dollars in 1950 and 202 billion in 1960.

What will such a national output mean for the American standard of living? More food, both inside and outside the home; more clothes and shoes; more homes; more toilet preparations. Furniture, floor coverings, and household appliances will increase in importance for the average home. More will be spent for automobiles and plane travel, and foreign travel will go up by almost 400 per cent. More money will be spent for the services of physicians and dentists, and on drugs. People will attend the motion picture theater and spectator sports in greater numbers—but the relative importance of expenditures for museums, libraries, and religious bodies, according to the Fund's report, will decline.

The ability to produce this vast quantity of goods—a quantity which would exceed what we had in 1940 by nearly 40 per cent—would be based upon a level of employment and a volume of production far greater than pre-war levels. Clearly, this sanguine picture can become a reality only if the American factory is permitted to fulfill its promise—a promise that, viewing past progress, technology is eager and ready to realize. As Dr. Dewhurst remarks: "Over the

past century we have achieved a fabulous increase in output per man-hour, not by working harder or more skillfully, but by constantly devising new and better machinery to augment human effort by the use of vast amounts of inanimate energy."

Nor does Dr. Dewhurst believe that increased technical improvements will create serious job difficulties for the workingman of the next generation. He concedes that personal tragedies engendered by changes in productive techniques may remain with us. But over the years, technological changes have given us more jobs, more goods, and more leisure.

The Fund's optimism, however, is tempered by the fact that even these glowing estimates of the 1950 and 1960 patterns of production, distribution, and demand will not meet the needs of the American people. To furnish everyone what sociologists and nutrition experts consider a minimum standard of health and decency would require an output of 200 billion dollars in 1950 and 210 billion dollars in 1960, and the Fund's elaborate estimates indicate that we will fall short by about 11 per cent in 1950 and by 7 per cent in 1960. To quote Dr. Dewhurst once again: "... there will still be many families in 1950 without enough income to live at a 'minimum level of health and decency.' Although a much smaller proportion of the 1950 consumers will be at the lowest income levels than even in prosperous 1941, about 7 per cent of the nearly 35.4 million families of two or more persons, and 24 per cent of the 12.5 million single individuals, will receive less than 500 dollars cash income."

As a basis for their roseate estimates, however, Dr. Dewhurst and his associates have adopted a number of simplifying premises. They assume that economic life between 1950 and 1960 will be "stabilized at a high level," that a continuously and steadily increasing amount of goods necessary for comfortable living will actually be produced by our industrial plant, and that the American people will have the purchasing power to buy these goods. All these premises are extremely vulnerable.

The premise, for instance, of a higher level of consumer spending involves the assumption that income distribution in 1950 and 1960 will be altered in favor of the low income groups. Recent statistics on income payments to individuals reveal that wage and salary earners received three billion dollars less in the first quarter of 1947 as compared with the same

period in 1945, while profits, interest, rent, and dividends increased eleven and a half billion dollars. This situation certainly does not favor consumer spending, and if it should continue for the next few years, the prospect of a high-consumption economy would be nullified. Nor is one justified in asserting that wartime savings will provide the required fillip for continuous spending. While it is true that the American public saved about 28 per cent of its income during the past few years, price ceilings no longer exist and high wartime wages are now a happy legend. In the last quarter of 1946 less than 10 per cent of income was being saved. Furthermore, as the Fund's study readily admits, the bulk of wartime savings was concentrated in the middle and upper income groups and is currently being used for purchases of luxury items: automobiles, high-priced radios, and travel. The really significant areas for spending—housing, machinery, and equipment—show no marked signs of activity.

These facts suggest that the kind of straight line projection of America's economic future offered by the Twentieth Century Fund does not furnish a realistic basis for prediction. It fails to take into account the intransigence of economic relations, an intransigence which makes it unlikely that capitalism will undergo drastic modification. Yet, without such modification, as many economists have pointed out, the stream of purchasing power will not flow to those who need it most and can use it best.

**D**R. Dewhurst and his associates also assume that spending for producers durable goods—what the economists call real investment—will continue at approximately the same rate as it has in the past. That this is but another case of wishful thinking may be seen from an analysis presented by C. Reinhold Noyes, president of the National Bureau of Economic Research, in his article "Prospects for Economic Growth" (*American Economic Review*, March 1947).

Available estimates show that the ratio of spending for machinery, equipment, and construction—capital goods—to gross national expenditure ranged in former years from 14 to 19 per cent. The Twentieth Century Fund study assumes that this ratio will be about 16 per cent in 1950 and 1960, thereby continuing the kind of economic progress witnessed before World War I. Dr. Noyes, however, analyzing actual trends, says: "It appears that for the first time

in our recent history and perhaps for the first time in our entire history, the process of growth in reproducible wealth [capital goods] has practically ceased for an entire decade."

According to accepted statistical standards, expenditures on capital goods is the best index of growth. Yet from 1931 to 1945, Dr. Noyes shows, the consumption of capital goods exceeded capital creation by 9.5 billion dollars—despite a marked upsurge in capital creation in the later years. In other words, we have been using up our capital at a faster rate than we have been replacing it. Whatever capital formation (the economists' technical term for additions to capital goods) did take place assumed the most ephemeral forms—inventory increases and claims on foreign debtors.

Upon closer examination of the evidence, Dr. Noyes discovers that this tendency was more apparent in the private than in the public sector of the economy. "Since 1930 the private economy in the aggregate has not only failed to create any new net real capital; it has not even maintained its net capital intact. . . . In fact we have been to some extent living on our fat. There can also be no question but that the private economy will continue to stand still unless the process of its own net capital formation is resumed."

The obvious consequence of this startling transformation would be a relative decline in living standards. This has indeed taken place. Dr. Noyes shows that the improvement in standards of living that occurred between 1929 and 1941 was less than half the improvement in the decade before 1929. Furthermore, these improvements were expressed largely as purchases of soft goods and perishables—again a type of investment which is soon dissipated. Spending for the more durable forms of commodities, such as residential housing, contracted.

Dr. Noyes argues that this lack of investment is attributable to discouragingly high taxes and to the unwillingness of investors to place their funds with private industry. People with savings, we are told, prefer not to become partners in industrial enterprise; they fear to undertake the risk of new economic adventures and would rather hold their money in safer forms, notably government bonds. Whatever the motives of the "average" investor, there is no gainsaying the fact that capitalism seems to be losing its attractiveness, even as a cash proposition. And if capitalism can no longer draw sustenance from those presumably most interested in its



ultimate success, then it certainly does not augur well for its continued economic health.

Not all economists are willing to concede that capitalism has lost its vigor. Sumner H. Slichter, Professor at Harvard University, suggests ("Eight Errors in Our Economic Thinking," *New York Times Magazine*, August 10, 1947) that we have been unduly influenced by the unfortunate experience of the 1930's, and consequently fail to understand the dynamic potentialities of the American economy and its capacity to raise up new enterprises and new industries. National income in 1960, he estimates, should reach 237 billion dollars—a figure considerably higher than the Twentieth Century Fund estimate. The basis for this sanguine outlook is a continued increase of three per cent a year in output per man hour.

Growth of this kind can be achieved, says Professor Slichter, because of the competitive drive inherent in our economy. Competition continually forces the three million business enterprises in our country to search for new methods in making and marketing goods, requiring new plans and equipment. In fact, says Professor Slichter, we are now actually suffering from a deficiency in capital equipment of about forty billion dollars. This demands more and more saving by the American people. The belief that we should be less thrifty is an egregious error, he says, for only by saving can we accumulate the funds necessary for so huge an expansion.

But while it may be true that we need more savings to obtain more plant, how certain are we that even existing equipment will continue to function at high levels? And if the need for savings is really so great, how can Professor Slichter explain the propensity for present-day savings to be invested in government bonds rather than new plant? This question poses a serious dilemma. While continuous utilization of capitalism's industrial apparatus demands a steady flow of income, the savings economists deem necessary for plant expansion reduce the spending needed to take the products of existing factories. The problem for capitalism is essentially one of balanced savings and spending; it is a fundamental one and Professor Slichter does not face it.

THE thesis that capitalism periodically falters because it fails to generate the requisite purchasing power to absorb goods as they pile

off the belt-line has been re-stated by Fritz Sternberg in his book, *The Coming Crisis* (New York, John Day, 1947). While Dr. Sternberg frequently encumbers his analysis with circumlocution and neo-Marxist interpretation, he does succeed in showing that our economy has not yet solved the basic problem of consumer buying power, despite its present volume.

The capitalist process demands a continuous expansion of productive facilities, which can be sustained only if there is a commensurate expansion of consumer purchasing power. Yet this is precisely what capitalism has been unable to do. This dilemma has been solved in the past, according to Dr. Sternberg, by the discovery and exploitation of new markets—usually overseas. Capitalism moved into new continents. The profits gained there enabled home-country industrialists to placate their own working class; all groups in the advanced nations benefited from a prosperity founded on the exploitation of colonial natives. But this solution, says Sternberg, can no longer be used. When the First World War broke out in 1914, there were few new areas available.

The lack of additional markets prevented the leading nations from digging themselves out of the economic morass of the 1930's. By that time, the old type of commercial imperialism was dead. Soviet Russia eliminated a large part of the globe from possible capitalist cultivation; America preferred to isolate itself behind a high tariff wall rather than experiment with a revival of foreign trade; Central Europe was absorbed into the *Lebensraum* of a revived German imperialism; and Eastern Asia became the exclusive domain of an industrialized feudal Japan. Capitalism consequently had to fall back upon internal markets. As of 1939 this effort had not yet succeeded; production was still low and it was not until the gears of a huge war machine began to grind that employment and incomes increased. The industrial nations entered the Second World War, says Dr. Sternberg, with the 1929 crisis still unresolved.

Most economists concede that the United States represents the largest and most important single factor in future world prosperity. If we can maintain a high degree of economic stability, and if we are willing to help other nations restore their industrial apparatus, then the world can draw a deep breath of hope. Dr. Sternberg would not disagree with this view. But he does not believe that the capitalist *modus operandi*

will permit this to come about. It may be that American productive ability is great—greater today than at any time before the war—yet we have not solved the problem, any more than other nations have, of smoothly distributing an enormous quantity of goods.

Sternberg contends that there are no new markets available to this country. American foreign trade, which is responsible for about 10 per cent of the national income, is too small to offer much promise, and its potentialities are limited by the weakness in purchasing power abroad. He does not think, as do the Keynesians, that it is possible to establish workable controls to guarantee an adequate total of domestic purchasing power. Neither will continued investment in the capital goods industries solve the problem of generating purchasing power, since such investment can be of no help if it is not accompanied by a like expansion in consumer spending ability.

**D**R. STERNBERG's analysis, then, attributes decline to the operations of internal elements. It asserts that the capitalist engine falters because of an inherent inability to keep the fuel—i.e., purchasing power—circulating properly. Other economists, however, deny that capitalism suffers from a faulty structure. There is really nothing wrong with the engine, they say; it is, rather, that the driver has abandoned his control. An outstanding representative of this school of thinking is Professor Joseph A. Schumpeter of Harvard University, who in his recently revised *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy* (New York, Harper, 1947) has set forth this attitude with remarkable ingenuity and considerable charm. (Professor Schumpeter also discusses Marxism and socialist politics, but we shall be concerned here solely with his diagnosis of capitalism.)

Professor Schumpeter seeks to prove that the "... actual and prospective performance of the capitalist system is such as to negative the idea of its breaking down under the weight of economic failure, but that its very success undermines the social institutions which protect it, and 'inevitably' creates conditions in which it will not be able to live and which strongly point to socialism as its heir apparent."

The first part of this thesis is based on the ostensibly proven ability of capitalism to produce increasingly greater quantities of commodities. Professor Schumpeter contends that the primary criterion of economic performance is

output, and that capitalism, especially in the United States, has unquestionably measured up well on this index. From 1870 to 1930, he argues, America's average annual rate of increase in production was 3.7 per cent. If this tempo could be continued for another fifty years, there would be no question about the abolition of poverty; the average income per person would be twice the 1928 level and, together with the greater leisure and better quality of goods that would ensue, the standard of living would be irreproachable.

Capitalism, says Professor Schumpeter, has successfully raised living standards for the great mass of people because it continually introduces new methods of production, new commodities, new forms of industrial organization, new trade routes and markets. These innovations create an avalanche of goods for consumers which enlarge the stream of income. It is true that such innovations may also cause economic disturbance, but one may attribute to these sudden drastic changes virtually all the benefits gained through our economic order. Granted that the innovators, who seize opportunities and introduce new techniques and new goods, do so for the sake of profitable advantage; yet, though their behavior may mean a painful distortion of previous economic arrangements, in the long run it results in social gain. "The [capitalist] social arrangement is, or at all events was, singularly effective. In part it appeals to, and in part it creates, a schema of motives that is unsurpassed in simplicity and force."

The kind of capitalism we have, asserts Professor Schumpeter, does not interfere with the continued increase of production. Capitalism can never be stationary, for the changes that take place within it destroy the old forms and create new ones. This process is essentially one of "creative destruction" and within this framework large scale industry, erroneously criticized by some economists as monopolistic, has a specific function to perform. The practices of big business—including rigid prices, limited output, and patent controls—have in actuality kept the capitalist ship on a fairly even keel. Thus, it is asserted, monopolistic practices serve as a desirable counter-wheel to innovation.

**P**ROFESSOR Schumpeter's ingenious defense of capitalism implies, too, a denial of the Keynesian proposition that investment opportunities are now lacking. During the 1930's Lord Keynes argued that what we were wit-

nessing was not a mere depression and a slow recovery, but symptoms of a permanent loss of business vitality that would continue and degenerate into lasting economic senility. Followers of Keynes, such as Schumpeter's colleague Alvin Hansen, point to the declining rate of population growth, the passing of the frontier, and the existence of a huge volume of unused savings as evidence of economic petrification. But, says Professor Schumpeter, it is gratuitous to assume that the absence of available new lands or the slower rate of population growth means a lower level of production. One ought to "... put some trust in the ability of the capitalist engine to find or create ever new opportunities, since it is geared to this very purpose. . . ." Beyond this admirable declaration of faith, however, Professor Schumpeter offers no effective rebuttal to those who see our economic ills as basic to the present system.

If we are to look for capitalism's breakdown, says Professor Schumpeter, we shall discover its roots not in the realm of economics, but in the habits of thought which comprise its cultural superstructure. Capitalist thought, he says, is eminently rational and logical; the very nature of economic calculation impels the businessman to employ clear thinking.\* Capitalism is also anti-heroic, fundamentally pacifist, and apt to insist on the application of private morals to international relations. Moreover, it provided the social arena for a new bourgeoisie which produced, on the basis of a strong, powerful, and Puritanical individualism "... not only the modern mechanized plant and the volume of the output that pours forth from it, not only modern technology and economic organization, but all the features and achievements of modern civilization. . . ."

Yet this superb engine is falling apart, Schumpeter declares. Capitalism in its early stages was essentially an adventure. The individual businessman may have undertaken risks for the anticipated return, but he was also motivated by the implicit challenge to his industrial and commercial ability. Today, progress has been mechanized, as is evidenced by the research programs of most large corporations, and the function of the entrepreneur—to alter old patterns of production by utilizing untried possi-

bilities—has atrophied. Innovation, which "... is primarily responsible for the recurrent 'prosperities' that revolutionize the economic organism and the recurrent 'recessions' that are due to the disequilibrating impact of the new products or methods. . .," is being reduced to mere routine. The romance of earlier commercial adventures is wearing away; bureau and committee work now replaces individual action. All this, the inevitable outcome of the capitalist process, tends to make progress automatic and to convert the bourgeoisie into a superfluous class. As Professor Schumpeter remarks, "... the very success of capitalist enterprise paradoxically tends to impair the prestige or social weight of the class primarily associated with it. . . . The giant unit of control tends to oust the bourgeoisie from the function to which it owed social weight."

This process of social displacement eliminates the small trader and producer; private property and freedom of contract become archaic legal instruments; millions of shareholders with intangible rights to corporate income and assets take the place of active participants in the capitalist process; and the economic order no longer evokes the loyalty and emotional response required to sustain it. Thus, the people begin to turn away from capitalism, in spite of its effectiveness as a producing system.

The great mass of people, however, are themselves incapable of giving expression to their loss of faith. Their disappointments and dissatisfactions must be given voice by those alienated intellectuals who have acquired a vested interest in unrest. Most intellectuals—defined by Schumpeter as those who possess the power of the spoken and written word—sooner or later become detached from the economic order. They discover that they have been overproduced, as it were, and that consequently their financial remuneration is small or nothing at all. They resent a capitalism which gives them no social status, no role to perform, and they are ultimately driven to stimulating, verbalizing, and organizing discontent.

IT MIGHT almost appear that Professor Schumpeter agrees with Marx: capitalism continually generates inner contradictions. It creates a social atmosphere that "... grows more and more hostile to capitalist interests, eventually so much so as to refuse on principle to take account of the requirements of the capitalist engine and to become a serious impediment of its function-

\* On the other hand George Katona has explored the irrational basis of capitalist calculation in his "Psychological Analysis of Business Decisions and Expectations" (*American Economic Review*, March 1945). See my discussion in COMMENTARY, November 1946.

ing." But capitalism as an economic machine can operate well, insists Professor Schumpeter. The explanation of periodic fluctuations—which are signs of virility—is to be sought in the behavior of capitalistic innovations. The explanation of its final collapse is in the destructive actions of non-economic-minded individuals.

The manifestations of decomposition are also non-economic; they are reflected in the disintegration of the bourgeois family and the obsolescence of the home. Children are no longer economic assets but have become a burden, and hospitality shifts from the household to the restaurant and the club. The effect of this social transformation is to reduce the desire for incomes beyond a certain level. The businessman's horizon shrinks to encompass only his own lifetime; he no longer cares to accumulate a fortune for the sake of his descendants. These are anti-saving concepts; they create a system of values that are no longer geared to the classical capitalist ethic. All this is accepted as a matter of course, according to Professor Schumpeter. The bourgeoisie does not resist these changes, for it no longer can resist. And "... the only explanation for the meekness we observe is that the bourgeois order no longer makes any sense to the bourgeoisie itself and that, when all is said and nothing is done, it does not really care."

Capitalism, to Professor Schumpeter, is essentially an economic mechanism for producing goods. His selection of descriptive nouns—*engine* and *machine*—as well as his emphasis on the sole criterion of increasing productivity is indicative of his view. While he does admit that distribution of the output amongst the mass of the people is an important aspect of the problem, he will not concede, as do many other economists, that it is the central question in modern capitalism. Consequently, he sees capitalism as a productive device, never as a distributive mechanism. This permits him to assign the cause of capitalist decline to factors which are not part of the system itself—to the perversity of human beings who fail to realize that capitalism enjoins the individual to a life of severe and unremitting accumulation (and therefore production) of wealth.

But to ignore the problem of distribution and purchasing power in this way is to dodge the task of developing an adequate explanation of capitalist decline. For it is the periodic accumulation of vast quantities of goods that is the most exasperating feature of that decline. That,

essentially, is a matter of distorted distribution of income and requires more attention than Professor Schumpeter has given to it. Similarly, it is questionable if production is the only criterion for measuring the supposed success of capitalism. Even if we were to admit—in the face of the analysis of falling accumulation presented by Dr. Noyes—that our present economic arrangements permit a continuous increase in output, the crucial problem is not the amount of commodities made available, but the manner in which they are distributed. It is income distribution and purchasing power which moves goods, rather than technical innovations. It is the inability of large numbers of consumers to purchase the goods produced which creates the periodic drag on the capitalist machine. It is, in the final analysis, an internal distortion, rather than ignorance or malice, that underlies economic collapse.

There was a time when capitalism was the great producing mechanism that Professor Schumpeter still thinks it to be. The early merchant-capitalist burst the barriers of feudal restrictions with a flood of commodities. In our time, as Thorstein Veblen has shown, the mechanism has become concerned primarily with the manipulation of money values, not with the creation of goods; with finance, not with production. And if money values can be increased by curtailing production, as is so often the case, then so much the better. Throughout large sections of the business community there seeps the fear—the dread—of uninhibited production.

Nor has Schumpeter been very fortunate in his choice of scapegoat. To assert that intellectuals harbor the desire to destroy capitalism is certainly extravagant. There are as many persons with the power of the written and spoken word who will defend capitalism as there are who will attack it. There are as many who have a vested interest in order as there are who seek to encourage unrest. There are as many who believe they have discovered roots in capitalist soil as there are who feel alienated from it. It is not the intellectual who destroys capitalism. Wherever capitalism falters, staggers, goes under, the case-history shows that it has usually cut the ground from under its own feet.

The unanswered question remains: How in our society can we maintain and increase purchasing power to the degree needed to keep the production machinery in high gear and avoid a breakdown?



## LETTERS FROM READERS

### Back-Fire

Mr. Dore Schary, producer of the film *Cross-fire*, is preparing an answer to "Letter to the Movie-Makers" by Elliot E. Cohen (August COMMENTARY), which he has promised for our October issue; and we are postponing publication of comments from our readers until that issue.—Ed.

### Add: Ehrenberg

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

May I add one delayed firecracker to Martin Thomas' wonderful demolition of Ilya Ehrenburg in your August issue?

In Bucharest the man who probably deplores Ehrenburg most is one Marius, major-domo of Kapsha's famed restaurant on the Calea Victoriei. To this mecca of all surviving gourmets in liberated and hungry Rumania, Ehrenburg came one day during his reportorial tour of Russia's Europe.

"I served him with my own hands, that Ehrenburg," Marius told me, his voice quivering with remembered indignation. "He said his mission in Bucharest was to make a big story about how well Rumania was getting along under the glorious Soviet occupation. For evidence, I gave him the best meal he had eaten since Paris before the war. He said so himself. He ate and ate. He sent his congratulations to the chef. And then, when he had finished, he wrote a terrible story about us, about the decadent capitalist atmosphere, the sickeningly rich food, the 'snivelling bourgeois clientèle.'"

HAL LEHRMAN

New York City

### Nationalism and the Jews

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In his article, "Racism and America's World Position," in the August issue of COMMENTARY, Carl Dreher takes issue with my article in the August 1946 issue, in which I suggested that Jews are the natural protagonists in the fight against nationalism and that they will have to decide in a not too distant future "to fight political nationalism uncompromisingly and on principle, inside Jewish life as well as outside."

I agree with Mr. Dreher's statement that American nationalism contains elements which "offer a hopeful possibility of exerting decisive counter-racist force," and I took this factor into account when I contrasted the "amalgamating American conception" with the "separatist European notion of nationality." Indeed, despite the deep cleavage which exists between the ideologies of the United States and the Soviet Union, it is one of the most reassuring facts in the post-war world that both powers favor a type of nationalism which aims at the development of a common pattern of life and is not "racially or ethnically based." . . .

But this type of nationalism is not representative of that nationalism which has swept and is still sweeping the world at large. It could grow under the peculiar melting-pot conditions of this country; in Russia it represents as yet a rather new experiment, an attempt to imitate the American experience. But nowhere else does there exist a political structure into which a new nation could be molded out of an ethnical, religious, and cultural multiformity. Wherever such a political structure existed it was destroyed by nationalism during the last decades. The type of nationalism which now prevails outside of the two countries is "racially or ethnically based"—especially the nationalism of the smaller nations, including the Jews.

Mr. Dreher's argument profits from the fact that there is no proper definition for the term "nationalism." But if nationalism cannot be defined *in abstracto*, its meaning can still be derived from historical experience and from the programs of the so-called nationalist movements in various countries. All of them have tried to establish loyalty to the nation as man's supreme duty; all have tried to make the nation the sole instrument of human endeavors to higher organization; and all have developed, at least in our generation, an increasing tendency to put the interests of the nation above individual rights and human decency, on the one hand, and above the interests of humanity on the other.

Therefore I cannot agree with Mr. Dreher's opinion that nationalism and racism "are in conflict on the plane of morality and idealism," and least of all would I consider this "self-evident." Nationalism has evolved its own pat-

tern of morality, and it is precisely "on the plane of morality and idealism" that racism logically and consistently continued the development which European nationalism had taken before. (This does not mean, of course, that racism was bound to adopt such ruthlessly exaggerated forms as it did in Germany.) The Second World War has broken the magic spell which nationalist conceptions exerted on the masses of the population in Western countries—perhaps temporarily, perhaps forever. This is the "undecided question" about nationalism in the West. But the war has not changed the basic character of modern nationalism and it has certainly not weakened its racist components.

Lord Acton saw the essence of nationalism in its tendency "to sacrifice liberty or prosperity to the imperative necessity of making the nation the mould and measure of the state." These words were written more than eighty years ago, but every single phase in the history of nationalism up to the present day has borne out this statement.

Lord Acton's words contain implicitly the answer to Mr. Dreher's main argument: that nationalism is naturally opposed to racism, because racism tends to impair the strength of the nation. If modern nationalism behaved so rationally that its spread could be influenced by petty considerations of usefulness, it would not be the formidable force which it actually is. I am afraid that among the few "rational" factors on which under given circumstances the spread of nationalist or racist ideologies depends, only one can be relied upon: the exploitation of the irrational potentialities of nationalism for the aims of ambitious politicians. Hitler provided the world with an elaborate plan in this respect. The example of his personal success in its performance constitutes a grave danger—especially for the Jews.

ERNEST MUNZ

New York City

### German Guilt and Re-education

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I read Samuel J. Hurwitz's article, "Diagnosing the German Malady," in the August issue of COMMENTARY, with a great deal of interest and pleasure. It is an intelligent attack on the racist thesis regarding the innate wickedness of all Germans.

It provided an excellent historical analysis of the institutional arrangements and the accidents of German history which created the triumph of Hitlerism in Germany. Dr. Hurwitz drops the subject just at the point where diagnosis ends and cure should begin. This is no criticism of him, but it does point up the need for further discussion of such ques-

tions as how far education can go in curing the malady and how effective ethical preachments can be in the face of the existing institutional arrangements. . . .

BENJAMIN HASKEL

Textile Workers Union of America  
Washington, D. C.

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Reading David Bernstein's interesting article, "Europe's Jews: Summer, 1947," in the August COMMENTARY, I was disturbed to come upon a reference to "the extreme nationalism preached by Herr Schumacher in the British zone."

There are many kinds of nationalism, and the record of Kurt Schumacher shows that his nationalism is that of a man who wishes to see his country move on the path of justice, democracy, and progress. Was it "extreme nationalism" to denounce the illegal and inhuman deportations of some ten million people (Germans, it is true) from their homelands during the past two years? Is it "extreme nationalism" to oppose the annexation of purely German territory by Soviet satellite states? Is it "extreme nationalism" when a man who has fought all chauvinism among his own people—and this fight has never been an easy or a popular one in Germany, and least of all today—fights also for the human rights and civil liberties of his own people? It would seem to me that a man who has had the courage to denounce the wrongs done by his country has the right to denounce the wrongs done to his country—even if his country is Germany.

The fact seems to be that Kurt Schumacher's "extreme nationalism" was invented by German and non-German Communists—because of his opposition to the proposed merger of the Social Democrats with the Soviet-dominated Social Unity Party and because of his consistent fight, since his release from a concentration camp, for Germany's reconstruction as a Jeffersonian democracy rather than a Communist satellite of the Soviet Union.

NORBERT MUHLEN

New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I found Franz L. Neumann's article on "Re-educating the Germans" in the June COMMENTARY a very thorough and interesting study of this intricate problem.

Mr. Neumann concludes that three basic educational reforms are vital to the achievement of our goal: (1) the destruction of educational privileges; (2) the elimination of the caste spirit in German universities; and (3) the secularization of education.

I agree fully on the first and second requirements. The children of the working class in

Germany would have been very good material for academic careers if they had not been excluded by tradition, social barriers, absence of scholarships, etc. The tradition is, indeed, so deeply entrenched that even the universities in the Russian zone find it difficult to increase substantially the percentage of students coming from the working class. The reason for this is that there are too few students coming from this class who have been adequately prepared for studying at the university. A reform, therefore, must start with providing sufficient opportunities for the admission of working class children to secondary schools. . . .

The evil of the caste spirit in the German universities is, to be sure, a corollary of the German class system. The faculties of universities inevitably used their autonomy for the purpose of preserving their homogeneous social character.

Reforms aimed at the democratization of educational opportunity and the spread of a democratic spirit within the educational system will be supported by a large majority of the German people, the more since the old conditions have been preserved not so much by the influence of those who actually wanted an undemocratic system as by the inertia which slowed down educational reforms under the Weimar Republic.

As to Dr. Neumann's third demand—the complete secularization of schools—I am doubtful whether it can and should be pursued at this time. Although the influence of churches has frequently retarded progress and sustained antiquated conceptions of the relationship between the state and the individual, the churches have nevertheless contributed substantially to the resistance against the cynical teachings of National Socialism. It should not be overlooked that the common fight against the Nazi movement, waged by religious Christians as well as by democratic socialists, has created a bridge between these two groups. Both have found that there is great affinity between the fundamental ethical principals of Christianity and of socialism. Church leaders have moved away from their intransigent attitude of respecting the state as such, whatever its character, and have acknowledged the duty of the church to protect the community against immoral political doctrines and restraints of religious freedom. Socialists found that "free thinking" was not an ultimate solution of the spiritual problems with which mankind is faced.

Cooperation between these two groups appears to be the only solid foundation for democratic government in Germany. A split between them would drive Social Democracy into opposition and, by necessity, into some combination

with the Communists. And the bourgeois parties that stress their Christian principles, such as the Christian Democratic Union, would feel constrained to look for alliances with parties of the Right. This would necessarily increase the weight of the Conservative element within these parties, and give a new chance to fascism.

Social Democracy and the Christian Democratic Union have much common ground on which to build a common policy. The confessional school is one of the few points on which they disagree. It would be bad policy to cause friction over this problem, which is not likely to have any satisfactory solution in the near future. For the time being, in Catholic areas, the feeling of the parents in favor of the confessional school is overwhelming. In Bavaria, 85 per cent of the parents, far more than the percentage of votes for the Catholic party, professed to be in favor of the confessional school. Under democracy, these feelings will have to be respected.

The importance of the whole issue should not be overrated. If we are able to develop in Germany a democratic community of vital strength, it will be able to reform the school system and secure an education in a democratic spirit without being too greatly impeded by the influence of churches on education.

JOSEPH KASKELL

New York City

#### TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

The publication of the article "Is Every German Guilty?" by Paul W. Massing (COMMENTARY, May 1946) must cause deep resentment in the hearts of all Jews who have not forgotten their six million dead.

The author, while anti-Nazi, is saturated with objectionable and dangerous Germanic philosophy, by trying to prove the myth of two Germanies, the "good" Germans and the Nazis. The article smacks of an apology for what happened in Germany. . . .

Despite Mr. Massing's and other pro-German writers' efforts to make it appear as though the criminals are few in number, the "good" Germans have as yet shown no signs of expiating even a millionth part of their iniquities. Furthermore, it is a known fact that the underground in Germany was never heard of, for the simple reason that it did not exist. We hear a lot of talk of a satisfactory quality, alleged to come from the German people, who have been politically dead since 1933. There is an embarrassing lack of proof that the long deceased have recovered power to speak.

In publishing the article, COMMENTARY has shown what little regard it has for Jewish pub-

lic opinion which wants no dealings with Germans or Germany socially, culturally, economically, or otherwise. I firmly believe in freedom of opinion, but I maintain that articles of this type in a Jewish magazine are contrary to the interests, the dignity, and the self-respect of the Jewish people.

K. D. SHAMBERG

Jewish Action Committee  
New York City

#### TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Somewhat belatedly I would like to congratulate you on Franz Neumann's article, "Re-educating the Germans," in your June issue.

As a member of the American Education Mission to Germany, I had an opportunity to see firsthand the effects of some of the aspects of German education of which Neumann writes. He has given a good picture of the problem and of our failure to handle it with imagination.

As Neumann points out, the problem of education is interrelated with the whole social and economic picture. For this reason, I feel very strongly that the most useful thing America can do is to give support to those forces in German society, particularly the labor unions, in which there is a residue of dynamic strength which might force changes in the whole German picture. We can do more to aid German re-education by supporting the trade union schools than by sending over experts in education administration.

LAWRENCE ROGIN

Textile Workers Union of America  
New York City

### A Divergence of Opinion

#### TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

For many months your sensitive and valuable magazine has been marred by the untiring cynicism of Mr. Sidney Hertzberg. His adventures in *Realpolitik* have betrayed an anti-Zionism which has more than once verged on anti-Semitism. Through unrelenting disparagement of Palestinian Jewry, atomization of the world community of Israel, and friendly nods in the direction of Arab feudalism, he has become a symbolic spokesman of the last ditch stand of Jewish self-hatred. Only the bland facade of "facts" has been able to conceal his vicious crop of half-truth and innuendo.

But at last Hertzberg is in the open. In a review of *Behind the Silken Curtain* by Bartley C. Crum and *Palestine Mission* by Richard Crossman, the chips are down and the colors

unfurled. Of course, he must needs prefer the British objectivity of Crossman to the Christian moralism of Crum. But, indeed, it is the Crossman of the slur on Jewry, not Crossman the moderate Zionist, who wins his approval. Where Crossman is an authority on Palestine, he is merely criticized, but where the aristocratic outsider notes American Zionism adversely, and admits his own dislike of Jews, he is quoted *in extenso*. The angry Crum, crusading not without reason for justice miscarried, is passed off as a naive and melodramatic corporation lawyer.

And even the "reason" is here. "One tires," sighs the weary reviewer, "of indignation." Here in all its naked filth is the flotsam washed up by vagrant cosmopolitanism. Like some southern Bourbon making charts of Negro housing in Georgia, Hertzberg asks for more "understanding" and less "indignation." Let him cheer the forgotten remnant of Europe with his call for "understanding." Jews will prefer the harder, more creative road of action to this word-splitting and political merry-go-round. The justice of the Jewish claim to Palestine will not be refuted. The little noise of the Hertzbergs cannot drown the ancient thunder which still bids Jews not to keep silent, for the sake of Zion and for God's world.

ARNOLD JACOB WOLF

Hebrew Union College  
Cincinnati, Ohio

#### TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I found your August issue especially interesting and on a consistently high level. Mr. David Bernstein's report on "Europe's Jews: Summer 1947" was easily the most thoughtful and balanced piece written on this subject anywhere, and Mr. Sidney Hertzberg's book review of *Behind the Silken Curtain* by Bartley C. Crum and *Palestine Mission* by Richard Crossman, showed a keen critical insight into the merits and backgrounds of two popular books.

HANS KOHN

Smith College  
Northampton, Mass.

#### TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . . I think that COMMENTARY is continuing its high standard of good writing on many interesting subjects. I always read its issues almost from cover to cover and whoever happens to be with me has to share at least some one article with me.

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## BOOKS IN REVIEW

### Humanist in Exile

CHRIST STOPPED AT EBOLI. By CARLO LEVI. Translated by FRANCES FRENAYE. New York, Farrar, Straus, 1947. 268 pp. \$3.00.

Reviewed by RAYMOND ROSENTHAL

BEYOND the penumbra of the great metropolitan centers, though not beyond the long reach of the police, tax collectors, and radios of its omnivorous state, Carlo Levi discovered a cut-off and abandoned culture and, what is much rarer, a community of unstandardized individuals. They were the peasants of Lucania, a poverty-stricken, landlord-squeezed province in Italy's southern "instep," and they were living in a world of pre-Christian pagan myth and stoical fatalism.

It was the year 1935, the year of Mussolini's preparations for the Ethiopian war, when Levi, a political suspect (actually he was one of the founders and leaders of the most intellectually influential underground group, the Justice and Liberty movement) and therefore a possible center of resistance, was transported under guard to live in "exile" in the villages of this region of eroded mountains and malarial swamps. *Christ Stopped at Eboli* is the lyrical and imaginative record of that year's experience.

Like so many recent books from Europe, the appearance of *Christ Stopped at Eboli* was linked in Italy with a companion volume of essays, entitled *Paura della Libertà* ("The Fear of Freedom"), which had been written a number of years before and presents Levi's philosophical position. Though its title will inevitably provoke associations with Erich Fromm's psychoanalytical study, Levi's treatment has few points of similarity. Originally, it was intended for publication under the Fascist regime. As a result, it is written in that highly allusive style which Italian anti-fascist writers had become skilled in contriving in order to evade the censorship. Camouflaged also by a purposefully recondite symbolism,

Levi launches in his book of essays a bitter attack on the idolatrous religion of the state as embodied most effectively and viciously in the programs and activities of the Nazis. Owing to its double-talk, the book's argument is difficult to follow in all of its nuances, yet the main thesis is quite clear and bears an important relation to *Christ Stopped at Eboli*.

LEVI contends that man's escape from freedom is into idolatry, which, in his view, includes the gamut of organized myths, from primitive magic and Christianity down to the modern religion of the mammoth and centralized state. Man escapes because he is afraid of the chaos of life, its indifferenciation, as Levi puts it, and wishes to flee the human responsibility of freedom. He freezes the flux and spontaneity of living relationships into the unnatural and inhuman forms of a ritual, be it the ritual of organized religion or the ritual of the totalitarian state. Every idolatry is a denial of the living, for it sets up in its place a static and debasing image that exists to suppress the spontaneous, the freedom of individual creativity. Only the artist, Levi implies, who can combine within himself "the two opposing forces of differentiation and indifferenciation," that is, of chaos and individuality, can achieve communication in truly human terms and thus attain to freedom.

In the light of this philosophy, much that is unclear in *Christ Stopped at Eboli* (though hardly what is equally so in the philosophy) will disappear. There is an evident irony throughout the book. The peasants' remark is that "Christ stopped at Eboli [the town where the highway turns off]; he didn't come this far," and all their resentment and anger loads this local proverb. But the proverb has more than one significance. Levi depicts the peasant sunk in an idolatry of primitive myth and magic which, nevertheless, is far superior in its human quality and spontaneity to those savage and baleful idolatries that have been on the rampage in recent European history. Even so, Levi regards the peasant as trapped in turn

by his own "fear of freedom." Levi himself does not surrender to the charm of peasant existence as readily as many other intellectuals who have traveled the road that leads from the city to the country.

*Christ Stopped at Eboli* is an unusual combination of the modern—its theme the most fundamental of contemporary social and political problems—and the decidedly old-fashioned. Carlo Levi represents a kind of European intellectual who, disillusioned with liberalism, yet intent on preserving some sort of cultural continuity, has not appeared so forcefully in European literature for many years. He is outside the tradition, both Marxist and Christian, that was responsible for molding such writers as Ignazio Silone and André Malraux. Perhaps one can explain the unfamiliar accent of his thought by Italy's long exile from the mainstream of modern culture. In any case, one naturally goes back to the Renaissance for his identifying image. It is Machiavelli in his exile among the peasants, and the picture he gives us of himself returning to his house after a day of trudging in the mud of the countryside. He removes his mud-bespattered clothes, and then, with a gesture of consecration, dons his robes and reads the classics.

The gesture of consecration and the mood of detachment, both part of feeling oneself the spiritual protagonist of a culture, and with this, the intense sympathy that binds him to those others, the peasants in the muddy fields—this is Levi's real quality. As expressed in *Christ Stopped at Eboli* it is, I believe, the most creative affirmation of humanistic faith yet to be produced by a survivor of Europe's spiritual collapse.

Humanism is perhaps the vaguest word in the liberal vocabulary, so one is required to be specific. By humanism, I mean the recognition of human diversity and particularity, their exploration by the poetic methods of sympathy and intuition, and, finally, the celebration of what has been discovered. It is the prime cultural task. When it is done properly, links and continuities are established, traditions are discarded or revived, and the forces of human possibility are splendidly evoked. The authentic humanist does not give up his quest when he finds man, as Levi found the peasants, more beastly than divine, swamped in superstition, unaware of the claims of history and of reason—in sum, more a part of the landscape than a

personality. Even here there is a living element beneath the dead layers, and it must be grasped and related to human destiny.

It is with such a purpose that Levi approaches the peasants of Lucania. His sympathy for them is grounded in something more experienced and actual than the slogans of a political party. When he ironically praises the peasants' condition of exile, one realizes that he and the peasants are in the same boat. And when he dwells too fondly on the peasant's most questionable virtue, his capacity for stoic endurance, one remembers that this is hardly a foreign emotion to an anti-fascist who has endured more than twenty years of Mussolini's tragic and provincial dictatorship.

YET, though always responsive and sensitive, Levi never for a moment relinquishes his role of the city intellectual, the mediator between two widely divergent and conflicting cultures. It is at the same time his great distinction and his great fault. While not following the example of writers such as D. H. Lawrence and Knut Hamsun, who became reactionary critics of the city and its ideologies after plunging themselves into the muddy current of the peasant's instinctual round, Levi holds his stance as arbiter and conscience at the cost of precisely that sense of participation in, and abandonment to, a dominating reality which marks these other writers.

But in maintaining this stance, he carries on the intellectual's work of clarifying, of understanding, of making connections. One sees this best in his approach to the peasant's political attitudes. Levi is an anti-fascist of long and honorable standing, but when living with the peasants, he made no effort to indoctrinate them. Rather, he patiently went about the job of discovering what *their* beliefs were. To a generation so accustomed to aggressive proselytizing, Levi's political tactics may seem too passive and lacking in militant assertion. Yet he does find out what the peasant thinks. "Their enmity toward a foreign or hostile government [the Mussolini regime]," he explains, "went hand in hand (paradoxical as it may seem) with a natural respect for justice, a spontaneous understanding of what Government and State *should* be, namely, the will of the people expressed in terms of law. 'Lawful' is one of the words they most commonly use, not in the meaning of something sanctioned and codified, but rather in the sense of genuine

and authentic. A man is 'lawful' if he behaves as he should; a wine is 'lawful' if it is not watered."

That is the method, and by this means Levi has revealed many phases of peasant existence never so perceptively recorded. He sees them cut off by more than the isolation imposed by geography, from the civilization symbolized by the twin capitals, Rome, the capital of political chicanery, and New York, the capital of wealth and gadgets.

In an essay at the end of his book, Levi sums up the situation of his peasants. The chief obstacle to the solution of their problem, he claims, is not only economic, or in a narrow sense political, but resides in the cult of the state. "We must rebuild the foundations of our concept of the State with the concept of the individual, which is its basis. For the juridical and abstract concept of the individual, we must substitute a new concept, more expressive of reality, one that will do away with the now unbridgeable gulf between the individual and the state. The individual is not a separate unit, but a link, a meeting place of relationships of every kind." Levi espouses a radical form of federalism, organized on the principle of the democratic and local autonomy of all participating units.

One can easily attack this formulation as vague and ambiguous. Yet Levi has the right to talk in terms of the individual and of the autonomy of the region, for he has backed up his politics by the richly demonstrative substance of his book. What it all boils down to is this: either you imagine that technique pure and simple can solve the political impasse or you take Levi's position that the imaginative, myth-making side of man is at least as important as a Five Year Plan or a New Deal; and that if this is so, the preservation of the individual and his sense of cultural integrity within the group is in reality an important factor in the ideal political program.

INEVITABLY, Levi will be compared with Ignazio Silone. And if one regards literature as a conversation between men passionately concerned with a community of problems and experiences, then Carlo Levi's work is in direct colloquy with the novels written by Silone. A very similar feeling pervades the work of both men, what has been called the Mediterranean feeling—that is, the willingness to take man at his deepest moral level and to capture

there all that is authentically friendly in his nature. But here the resemblance ends. For Levi, the peasant lives in an autonomous reality which he, the writer, cannot and does not want to share, while Silone is the disillusioned intellectual who wishes to submerge himself in the ethos of the countryside.

So the differences (and it is only when they exist that a real conversation takes place) are much more important than the similarities. Levi approaches the peasant as a detached observer and artist, not as a prophet, a messianic organizer of revolt. In contrast to this, Silone views the peasant world as the perfect moral landscape into which he can project and embody the drama of the fusion of Christian doctrine and Socialist theory.

Does this comparison imply that Silone is a less powerful writer than Levi? No, it is merely to show their individuality, one against the other. No definitive comparison can be made, for the good reason that Levi's work has just begun. And Silone's two fine novels, *Bread and Wine* and *Fontamara*, still stand secure and unrivaled in modern Italian literature.

There are a few further points to be made. What one understands at last about the peasants is surely more than what Levi intended to tell us. His sharp dichotomy of separate and hostile worlds is contradicted by facts he himself presents; the great influence of New York on the peasants is but one example. Not only is New York the peasant's earthly paradise, his real capital, but it is also the place from which he gets his metal tools and agricultural implements. The picture of Franklin D. Roosevelt hangs side by side with that of the pagan deity, the Black-Faced Madonna. One can presume that the wall Levi erects between the two civilizations is not so solid after all.

As a matter of fact, the peasants living in a region only twenty or so miles above Lucania still had the same attitude in 1943 toward New York and America. "We want to be the forty-ninth state of the United States," they hopefully told American soldiers soon after the invasion. "Italy's finished. What we need is a strong rich country like America to belong to." This analysis, presented by the peasants instinctively and on the spur of the moment, has not been improved upon by the political leaders of Italy's various crisis governments.

The peasant that Levi describes for us is on

all counts a superior human being. Levi was a city man, a doctor and a painter, besides being a Jew. The peasants accepted Levi because they delighted in his difference. It is an unusual reaction. The primitive people of most other countries, the sharecroppers of America, say, fear and distrust the "foreigner." The Italian peasant welcomes him, secretly hoping he is a god or a miracle-worker in disguise. Now, although the superstition is less than a rationalist would wish, it is certainly better that human friendliness is created than that it be squelched by an atmosphere of pseudo-science. One can be sure that the Southern sharecropper's hatred and fear of strangers can be ascribed as much to his lack of a mythic pattern, into which strangers and strangeness can be welcomed and tamed, as to any other single factor.

Lastly, Levi's assertion that the peasant is living entirely cut off from Italian culture is denied by his very choice of title for his book. Imagine a sharecropper in Mississippi expressing his hatred for the city by saying: "Christ stopped at Jackson." Such a phrase would never occur to him. That it comes naturally to the Italian peasant is certainly an indication of his profound connection with a culture, even if that culture excludes him. It is also the heartening reminder that at the lowest levels of European society, the need for continuity with a greater scheme still persists.

### The Road Back

MY FATHER'S HOUSE. By MEYER LEVIN.  
The Viking Press, 1947. 192 pp. \$2.50.

Reviewed by GEORGE J. BECKER

THE AUTHOR of *Citizens*, from whom one might have expected massive documentation, has here managed to handle a theme of major proportions delicately, almost poetically, in a novel less than two hundred pages. His subject is the survivors, those Jews who by luck or sheer will to live came through the Nazi holocaust to confront the future, bereft of a past and mutilated in spirit.

In effect, he tells the most bitter and the most broken that all is not lost, that regeneration is open to all, though he is careful not to suggest that there is any one road to regeneration. His general prescription, however, is made when he says: "For with Daavid it was the same as with every being; growth would drive him

outward." The first step occurs when each of the newcomers to Palestine takes a new name. To one of the characters growth arrives automatically with health. For others it is the spontaneous response to new activity and opportunity in Palestine. To Miriam, a survivor of a Nazi death camp by reason of her submission to biological experiment, it comes against her will as she is drawn into the currents of group activity. Dr. Nathan Mayer is shown as impervious to disaster, resuming in Palestine the profession he had practiced in Vienna as though the Nazi torment had never been. And to Daavid, the eleven-year-old hero of the story, growth comes by means of an infantile regression through which he forgets the past, even every language but Hebrew, and then grows rapidly in the security of foster parents when he is convinced that his search for his own father has failed.

A major factor in this process of growth is the hope that lies in Zion. Out of its clay it is possible to create new life; its problems demand energy and strength of will. Above all, of course, it is historic ground. Every stream, every hill, every ruin recalls earlier vicissitudes and is a reminder of triumphant survival. It seems quite natural that Daavid, hearing of the persecutions under King Ahasuerus, should ask: "Did Haman burn them in a crematorium?" When he emerges from the Search Bureau, stunned at the realization that the members of his family are all dead, it is to the chant of children playing in the street who cry:

"Mordecai! . . ."

" . . . hanging high!"

"Hang the Jews, I order it!"

"Save the Jews!"

"Where is Mordecai, to save the Jews?"

He, to be sure, can take no comfort from this merging of past and present, but by this perspective the author clearly intends that his readers shall find consolation and understanding, that the triumph of survival shall make its impact upon them.

Two interesting phases of the book should also be mentioned. First, there is the fact that past horror is deliberately played down. These people who are smuggled ashore in Palestine have survived Auschwitz, Belsen, Dachau, and other places. They have achieved a certain contempt for suffering and death, and the children in the orphans' camp actually vie with one another as to which has witnessed the biggest mass murder. It is emphasized that the best



course is to accept past reality, in order to forget it and become part of present reality.

The handling of the Arabs is particularly notable. One of the most memorable portrayals in the book is that of Jamil, an Arab, and others of his compatriots add color and humanity to the account. There is no hint of hostility to them; they too are a fact to be met calmly and without emotion. It is to be regretted that many of the immigrants come to Palestine "with the myth already grown in them." It is pointed out that "they would learn the complications in their time: whom to believe, and whom to bribe, and whom to fear; they would learn not to think of the Arab as a wild savage hiding by the roadside with a knife in his teeth, but as a poor bondsman, working his bit of land, superstitious, full of guile, and yet often of true honor, but easily misled."

The greatest weakness of the novel lies in its fluctuating symbolism. It is an intolerable burden for a boy of eleven to have to stand for the whole Jewish people in their search for a way to life. Thus he never comes fully alive; his search for his father comes dangerously near the triviality of "*un tour de France par deux enfants*," and his own psychological solution in regression is obviously not suggested as the way out for the Jewish people. On the whole, however, the book's meaning is impressive. It suggests the infinite possibilities of living and reaffirms faith in human material, however broken and distraught.

### Freud and Judaism

RITUAL: PSYCHOANALYTIC STUDIES. By THEODOR REIK. New York, Farrar, Straus, 1946. 367 pp. \$5.00.

Reviewed by MILTON HIMMELFARB

IN HIS chapter on "The Shofar" in the present work, Dr. Reik applies the orthodox Freudian exegesis to demonstrate that the early Israelites variously conceived of Yahweh (Jehovah) as a bull, a snake, or a stone. He makes his case insistently and defiantly. If we turn to *A Bird's-eye View of Jewish History*, published in 1935 by the highly respectable Union of American Hebrew Congregations, we find Dr. Cecil Roth remarking almost casually that in the Mosaic period "YHWH was, in effect, a deity of the same type as any other, represented at various times by a bull, or a snake, or a sacred stone. It was only very much later . . . that this

'monolatry' . . . became . . . 'monotheism' in the proper sense of the word."

The first German edition of Reik's work was published in 1919; the chapters on "Couvade" and "The Puberty Rites of Savages" date from 1914 and 1915. (It might even be maintained that the entire work is but a long footnote to Freud's *Totem and Taboo*, written in 1912.) Since the psychoanalytic victory has been so largely won, even the conventional today being mostly conventionally Freudian, why is Reik still so defiant, insisting in his preface of 1946 that "no essential changes were necessary"? Dr. Reik is of the first generation of Freud's personal disciples. (*Ritual* includes a preface by Freud.) Can it be that Reik resents anthropology's having selected the kernels of the Freudian contribution and rejected the husks of its dogma?

For the truth is that the anthropology of Freud's *Totem and Taboo* is by now no more modern than that of Frazer's *The Golden Bough*. Both are as great in their field as Darwin's work was in biology, and both have been similarly transcended. What anthropology has retained of Freud's teachings is essentially the decisive importance of infancy in molding the personality, and the potency of non-rational factors in determining behavior. It has not retained Freud's leveling approach to different societies—perhaps the consequence of a too great emphasis on biology—according to which, for example, the Oedipus complex is one and indivisible, everywhere and always, among all peoples in all times.

Today anthropologists hold to "the basic personality," which in one culture can have significant elements of difference from that of another culture. This implies that apparently similar initiation rites need not have in Polynesia, for instance, the same (subconscious) meaning they have in Australia. And this in turn implies that the pre-history of some tribes may not have known the killing and devouring of (God) the Father by the Primal Horde, and the Horde's subsequent coupling with the Father's wives (its mothers). Hence it may not be entirely valid to assume, as Freud and Reik do, the persistence of the Oedipus complex in the subconscious of humanity, with every man in his own development recapitulating a racial Oedipal trauma. Which is to say that much of the anthropological work of Freud (and Reik) may be as much myth as anthropology.

Observations of this sort are not new. Although intended to cast doubt only on Freud's anthropology, not on his therapy, they have usually been dismissed by the devoutly orthodox with an assertion that such ideas are "mere" rationalizations for a neurotic rejection of psychoanalysis; devout Marxists are wont to answer criticisms of *their* dogmas by labeling them "mere" reflections of the class interests of the bourgeoisie. Yet Freud himself would have despised this kind of argument. In his *History of the Psychoanalytic Movement* he says: "He who wishes to use analysis with polemic intent must offer no objection if the person so analyzed will, in his turn, use analysis against him, and if the discussion merges into a state in which the awakening of a conviction in an impartial third party is entirely excluded."

ALTHOUGH two of the four chapters of Reik's book are chiefly devoted to the customs of primitive peoples, a number of indications make it clear that even when Reik is discussing Caribs, Kaffirs, or Dyaks, he is always thinking of the Jews. In the other two chapters the Jews are no longer the repressed, but have become the manifest content.

The introduction to "Kol Nidre" includes this very interesting passage: "When a student, I had joined the Jewish National Association. Holding no positive religious belief, my mind had been occupied in following the conflict of contemporary political opinions—a subject on which I felt strongly. My interest at this time had been aroused by an annually recurring event . . . the appearance of the Vienna *Deutsche Volksblatt* on the eve of the Day of Atonement, when the full text of the Kol Nidre was printed in Hebrew type, with the German translation in juxtaposition. The text was to the effect that all oaths which believers take between one Day of Atonement and the next are declared invalid. The *Deutsche Volksblatt* invariably availed itself of the opportunity to deduce from this edict a moral depravity on the part of the Jewish race. . . . It effectually aroused in me a feeling of intense opposition, and, at the same time, I was conscious of a feeling of humiliation at my intellectual limitations and inability to disprove the charge. . . . We desire, however, to approach the question free from bias on either side, and to observe a neutral standpoint between anti-Semitic fervor and overzealousness in favor of the Jews."

Free from bias or not, Reik succeeds in "dis-

proving the charge." His disproof is based on two main concepts: the Oedipal relation of the Jews to God the Father, which need not detain us; and, closely associated with this relation, the ambivalence of the Jews toward their God. (Ambivalence is the coexistence in one person of two contrary feelings about a person or thing: love-hate, tenderness-cruelty, domination-subordination, etc. Ambivalence knows nothing of Aristotelian logic, in which identities cannot be contraries, and vice versa. There is general agreement that in our emotions, at least, we are more obedient to Freud's law than to Aristotle's.) In his analysis of the Kol Nidre, Reik's basic argument runs along these lines: the Jews are submissive to God, honor his commandments, and are in fact zealously scrupulous in respecting the sanctity of the oath; this submissiveness to God the Father is subconsciously resented and hated; in an annual act of symbolic rebellion the burden is repudiated; by a characteristic and ironical paradox, the rite of repudiation, the Kol Nidre, is placed at the very beginning of the devotions of the Day of Atonement, the most solemn annual rite of submission to God the Father, and is vested with much of the emotional charge of the entire Yom Kippur ritual; actually, this gesture of rebellion only serves, after giving a fleeting satisfaction to the suppressed resentment, to enable the Jews to preserve intact the sanctity of their oaths for another year, after which the whole process will be repeated, and so on forever. Few will deny that the argument is elegant, subtle, and witty.

Since Dr. Reik has here undertaken a task of "Jewish defense," one wonders how he would answer the even more vicious and more patently false charge of ritual murder, which accuses the Jews of slaughtering non-Jewish children at the Passover, with the alleged purpose of draining the blood for use in the preparation of unleavened bread. Reik does not consider this question in *Ritual*, but he does deal with it in a chapter of his *Der eigene und der fremde Gott* ("One's Own and the Foreign God," 1923), entitled "Das Unheimliche aus infantilen Komplexen" ("The Uncanny as It Derives from Infantile Complexes"). There he attempts to "disprove the charge," as well as to explain why it should be made at all. The disproof consists primarily in citing very similar accusations by the Roman pagans against the early Christians and refutations by several Fathers of the Church. The latter can be paraphrased

thus: "Let us examine who makes the accusation, and against whom it is made. Those who make it are notorious for the violence, immorality, and impiety of their mode of life; those against whom it is made are celebrated for their meekness, compassion, and abhorrence of bloodshed. If any children are slaughtered at all—which is most doubtful—it is certain that the perpetrators of so foul a crime must be found among the accusers rather than among the accused." Dr. Reik quotes these refutations with seeming approval and with the strong implication that they are of equal validity in the case of medieval and modern accusations of ritual murder against the Jews. (He also includes a long passage containing charges of ritual murder against Christian missionaries, made by Chinese intellectuals who fomented the Boxer Rebellion, in the early years of this century.)

As to the causes for the charge of ritual murder against the Jews in modern Europe, Dr. Reik finds them in the feeling of uncanniness aroused in non-Jews by Jewish circumcision. Uncanniness is the subconscious and ambivalent (repelled-attracted) racial memory of practices long suppressed, aroused in the observer by the persistence of such practice in a contemporaneous alien group. Ultimately, uncanniness is associated with the killing and devouring of the Father of the Primal Horde by his incestuous sons. It is aroused by circumcision because circumcision is an attenuated form of castration, which in turn is an attenuated form of human sacrifice, which derives proximally from the sacrifice of the first-born son, which, finally, derives from the killing and devouring of the Father of the Horde. Hence the association between the ideas of circumcision and of the slaughter of a child for the purpose of eating it—an association strengthened by the circumstance that the Passover, after all, is the direct descendant of the totem feast, which in turn descends from the slaying and eating of the Primal Father; all of which is readily apparent to the racial subconscious.

Two questions must be asked of Dr. Reik: why has he allowed his analytical tool of ambivalence, which he wielded so deftly in the Kol Nidre case, to lie idle in dealing with ritual murder; and is circumcision really as uncanny as he says it is?

Ambivalence might have embarrassed a Freudian early Christian confronted by a Freudian Roman pagan reasoning in this wise: "Your

very protestation that you abhor bloodshed strengthens me in the belief that you do indeed slaughter an infant once a year. This you do so that your subconscious resentment against your heavy burden of piety may be momentarily appeased (as well as for many other complex psychoanalytic reasons), whereupon you will be able to resume your yoke for another year. Witness our Saturnalia, and witness too what Dr. Reik will write many centuries from now on the Kol Nidre of the Jews." Writers concerned with disproving charges would do well to leave ambivalence alone; by its nature a dualistic concept, it is also a two-edged polemical weapon.

Circumcision, in the Western world, is uncanny—thus Dr. Reik. There is a strong temptation to believe that in saying this he is universalizing a phenomenon more or less specific to the Germany and Hapsburg Empire of his youth. Some recent writing on anti-Semitism by German-speaking Jewish psychoanalysts (for example, Otto Fenichel's "A Psychoanalytic Approach to Anti-Semitism," *COMMENTARY*, July 1946) refers to the language and costume of East European Orthodox Jewry as being uncanny, awakening atavistic memories in the modern German or Austrian. (Yiddish and the *kapote* and *shtreiml* are recognizable survivals of the speech and costume of medieval Christian Germany.) But surely there is no relation between Yiddish and the Primal Horde! Nor does it seem likely that circumcision is uncanny in the United States; for uncanniness is, as it were, the tickling of a racial memory, while in this country an ever increasing number of hospitals have made it a matter of course to circumcise newly born male infants, Jewish and non-Jewish, for reasons of hygiene and with no thought of introducing those who would otherwise be among the uncircumcised into the covenant of our father Abraham. What is winning such general popularity can scarcely be considered uncanny.

It has been said of Freud that he took the nature of the Viennese bourgeois of the late nineteenth century to be immutable and universal human nature. However that may be, it does seem that those psychoanalysts from Austria and Germany who have engaged in the perennially popular Jewish pastime of seeking "the traits of [other] Jews that contribute to anti-Semitism" have been dignifying the anti-Semitism of their early milieu by relating it to the Primal Horde, when it was only

anti-Semitism of the Austrian and German varieties, 1870-1939.

### The Civil Rights of Aliens

THE ALIEN AND THE ASIATIC IN AMERICAN LAW. By MILTON R. KONVITZ. Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1946. 299 pp. \$3.00.

THE CONSTITUTION AND CIVIL RIGHTS. By MILTON R. KONVITZ. New York, Columbia University Press, 1947. 254 pp. \$3.00.

Reviewed by THOMAS A. COWAN

IN *The Alien and the Asiatic in American Law*, Dr. Konvitz studies the legal status of two classes of persons, the alien and the American citizen of Asiatic origin, against the background of decisions of the Supreme Court of the United States. The study involves a consideration of legislative, executive, and administrative action as it is reflected in the actual decisions of cases. Although this approach necessitates work of a narrowly specialist character, since the handling of the legal material demands close attention to technical detail, the usefulness of the book is not too narrowly restricted, since the attitude of the Supreme Court toward this facet of "civil liberties" is a matter of concern to all those interested in social processes.

In *The Constitution and Civil Rights*, Dr. Konvitz deals with civil rights as a legal term of art. Civil rights refers to "the rights of persons to employment, and to accommodations in hotels, restaurants, common carriers, and other places of public accommodation and resort. The term contemplates the rights enumerated in the Federal Civil Rights Act of 1875 and the various acts against discrimination found on the statute books of eighteen states." In a word, the book deals with what has often been called the economic and social rights of Negroes, for this is the class for whose protection the above type of legislation is adopted. The treatment here is even more narrow than in *The Alien and the Asiatic in American Law* because the decisions on Negro rights comprise a wasteland, dry, arid, and pockmarked.

THAT Dr. Konvitz has handled his legal materials with thorough technical competence goes without saying. These books are there-

fore reliable summaries of the legal situation on the alien, Asiatic, and Negro as of the present time. While the layman may find the going rather rough in *The Constitution and Civil Rights*, that is the price to be paid for accurate signposting in this legal jungle. Indeed, technicality battled with lay common sense throughout both works. Dr. Konvitz was keenly aware of the dangers of steering between the Scylla of the *Harvard Law Review* and the Charybdis of (say) COMMENTARY. For example, the December 1946 number of the *Harvard Law Review* says of *The Alien and the Asiatic in American Law*: "This book is more a polemic than a balanced contribution to the subject." The February 1947 issue of the same journal has the following to say of *The Constitution and Civil Rights*: "It is disappointing that [Dr. Konvitz] has, in effect, done little more than set forth—albeit in convenient form—a list of legal sources unaccompanied by a critique, social, economic, and legal, of the civil rights problem." Damned if he does, and damned if he doesn't!

It is perfectly true that the two books are in fact different, that is, that *The Alien and the Asiatic in American Law* is in fact more of a social document, and that *The Constitution and Civil Rights* looks like a series of law review articles. In cases on the alien and the Asiatic, the Supreme Court has a better long-run record than in the enforcement of the civil rights of Negroes. And Dr. Konvitz, able legal scholar, was apparently content to let the bare record of failure in the case of the Negroes stand as an indictment against the court. Yet the mere legal record is at best a cold substitute for a translation into terms of warm and intelligently guided emotion. And when the story is so unimpassioned as to fret the *Harvard Law Review*, enough said.

In his account of the infamous Screws case, Dr. Konvitz is unsatisfactory in an illuminating way. In this case, Georgia police officers beat to death an arrested Negro under particularly revolting circumstances. The federal authorities dusted off an old Reconstruction statute and rather unexpectedly succeeded in obtaining a conviction. However, on review before the Supreme Court, the case was sent back for a new trial accompanied by a series of opinions that are monuments of confusion even for that body of abstruse legal theoreticians. In discussing the case, Dr. Konvitz



makes the following observation: "It is to be hoped that the decision in the *Screws* case will strengthen the Civil Rights Unit and prompt the Department of Justice to assume a policy of more vigorous investigation and prosecution of violations." And this despite the fact that the *Screws* case was in fact a crushing defeat for the Civil Rights Unit of the Department of Justice, since its best case had to be retried and since the rule of law as laid down by the majority opinion was absolutely unenforceable. Dr. Konvitz's legalistic estimate of the *Screws* case creates a wholly erroneous opinion of its efficacy even in the limited domain of civil rights. He should have kept in mind that a confused legal opinion is not a mere sport. It is the analyst's job to find out who benefits from the confusion. On this score, it is easy to see that the majority opinion as well as the conservative minority dealt federal civil rights a heavy blow in the *Screws* case.

Further, the whole question of the value of civil rights in a liberal democracy might well have been raised by Dr. Konvitz as the natural sequel to the legal studies in *The Constitution and Civil Rights*. Surely the net effect of failure on the part of legislature and court to protect "civil rights" calls for a study of the underlying sociological reasons why the legalistic approach is so inadequate. The bankruptcy of the "civil rights movement" in this country is amply demonstrated in precise technical fashion in Dr. Konvitz's second book. What then?

Why, obviously the problem of minority protection even with respect to "civil rights" is being attacked from the wrong end. The Atlantic Charter, to go no farther, expressly recognized the fact that economic opportunity is the basis of democracy, and half a century of sociological jurisprudence (Jhering, Stammler, Duguit, Pound) has driven home the conclusion that the social base must be sound before law can be just.

To risk a rather far-fetched analogy instead of the analysis which lack of space forbids: suppose our legislators were solemnly to outlaw poverty and, by criminal sanctions, to attempt to coerce the executive and judicial arms of the government to enforce the law. The result would be ridiculous, you hasten to say, the analogy forced. Admitted. But there's a modicum of truth in it. So much, indeed, that (abandoning the analogy) this reviewer is flatly of the opinion that fruitful

investigations in the field of "civil rights" lie in attempting to discover the grounds of its failure, rather than in carefully conserving (praise God for small favors) the isolated and occasional benefits resulting from sporadic enforcement of civil rights legislation.

### Peretz Sentimentalized

PERETZ. Edited and Translated by SOL LIPTZIN. New York, Yivo, 1947. 379 pp.

Reviewed by JACOB SLOAN

THOUGH Isaac Leib Peretz is commonly regarded, along with Mendele Mocher Sforim and Sholom Aleichem, as one of the giants of Yiddish literature, he has been sentimentalized to a much greater extent than either Mendele or Sholom Aleichem. Perhaps the reason is that it is easier to accept the comic spirit when it reveals itself in satire and broad humor than to perceive its ironic outlines behind pathetic and romantic envelopments. Or perhaps, again, the dilution, deliberate or unconscious, of Peretz's vigor is another reflection of the decline of popular emotion since his day into the synthetic folksy.

Whatever the reason, the present Yivo edition, first volume of a projected bilingual series of selections from Peretz's stories and articles, is unfortunately one-sided, representative of "popular" taste (in the invidious sense of the word), and unrepresentative of Peretz as a whole. It contains the "famous" stories: the "If Not Higher"—"Three Gifts"—"Seven Years of Plenty" type of morality-Hasidic tales, but not the harder sketches and pieces: nothing from his keen "Travel Sketchbook," no hint of the sarcasm of "Mendel Breines," the witty and bitter realism of "The Plague" with its rueful comments on Jewish-Gentile relations, none of the terror of "The Mad Pauper."

THE impression this selection gives is that Peretz was artistically oblivious to everything but the stereotypes of intra-Jewish morality. That is quite wrong. Peretz was more complex than both Mendele and Sholom Aleichem, and certainly as conscious of his time. His lean sharpness, which is too often mistaken for a common-denominator simplicity, is a real artist's attempt to objectify, to supply a background of plainness for a foreground of concen-

trated feeling. (From the memoirs about Peretz, his personality emerges as both effective and reserved, like Goethe's.) Of the contemporary Russian authors, whom he read as well as the German, he seems closer to the ambiguity of Chekhov and Turgenev than to Tolstoy's peasant spiritualism.

Even the stories in this weighted selection have flashes of Peretz's obliqueness and balance. Tevye, the porter in "Seven Years of Plenty," is invited by Elijah, disguised as a German, to enjoy seven years of plenty. Before deciding to go home and talk it over with his wife, Tevye looks around to see if a customer is coming; seeing no customer, he accepts—"what can he lose?" Thus the Jewish pauper prudently examines alternatives to miraculous salvation, in line with the Talmudic injunction, reworked by Yiddish disillusionment into the proverb: "You can't depend on miracles." "The Cabbalist," too, is clear-headed at his own expense: "If a person has to be up all night and starve all day, he may as well derive some benefit from his experience"—and uses it for purposes of self-castigation. And the couple in "An Idyllic Home" celebrate an idealized Sabbath, "if the brass candle-sticks are unpawned."

When we come to the Hasidic tales, Peretz's complication becomes more difficult, since it consists of a play between what the story says and what the story means. Ostensibly, the moral of "If Not Higher" is the Zaddik of Nemirov's "higher" realization of faith, through social works; however, neither the Zaddik nor his Hasidim are the point of reference, but rather the "oppositionist" Litvak. Though the Litvak is converted to belief in the Zaddik, he (and Peretz and we) becomes an *intellectual* Hasid; the Zaddik loses his intercessory function in the divine realms, since he does *not* go up to heaven during the time when the Penitential Prayers are being recited. He becomes an elevated ethical figure, not a religious figure.

Similarly, in "The Three Gifts" the soul in limbo gains access to heaven by presenting three extraordinary spiritual finds. But the author's mood is revealed less in the skillful drama of the gifts than in the total concept of the situation: "If God were to weigh all the virtues and vices of the entire world at the same time, the pointer would hardly budge or vibrate." This despair at the *equibalance* of (not the struggle between) virtue and vice is not resolved—or resolvable—by Hasidic joy. Peretz describes the experience of faith with clarity

and sympathy—but we do not experience it in him.

The articles in this volume are closer to Peretz's intellectual spirit—his individualistic rejection of the collectivized creativity which he foresaw in the wake of a Communist revolution, his concept of cultural cross-fertilization, his integrity as a conscious liberal and Jew.

One hopes that future volumes may complete and technically improve the study of a Yiddish writer who deserves the fullest treatment.

### The Unwon Victory

THE STEEPER CLIFF. By DAVID DAVIDSON. New York, Random House, 1947. 340 pp. \$3.00.

Reviewed by ALISON LURIE

WITHIN a few weeks of publication, this first novel about the Military Government in Germany is already on the best-seller lists. Superficially it is easy to see why: David Davidson's style is fluent, he handles dialogue well, and tells an exciting story. It is worth guessing that a long apprenticeship on newspapers and radio scripts has given him an ease rarely found in young novelists. (Unfortunately, however, his background has left a residue of crudities: ease at the expense of exactness. Words like *angelic*, *radiant*, *wonderful*, *horrible*, are used rather indiscriminately.) The novel, like many of today's best-sellers, also has a sentimental love story, in which a young woman is continually being compared to the Virgin Mary.

But beneath all this, what is it about the subject of the book that attracts readers? Everyone knows that war stories no longer sell, although it is hard to say why. For the same reason that we no longer want to read about heroic American soldiers, pilots, sailors, apparently we now want to read about an American who is unheroic in the conventional sense.

Perhaps the answer is that as long as the hostilities lasted we could overlook the damage our armies were causing by concentrating on the damage done by the other side. Now, as victors in possession of the ruins, we are left with the guilt of destroyers.

If this is true, David Davidson's *The Steeper Cliff* throws an interesting light on the situation. His story is about a guilty American in Germany. Andrew Cooper, who has been a desk soldier all through the war, is sent to Bavaria with the occupation troops and assigned to set

up non-Nazi newspapers. While nervously interviewing candidates for editorial positions, he hears about a liberal writer named Lorenz who has disappeared. Almost at once Cooper decides that this man is his spiritual double; and the rest of the book is taken up with his search for Lorenz in order to find out how he, Cooper, would have acted had he been a German.

As a conqueror, Cooper is completely uneasy. Ruins upset him. When he denies a German his licence to write he worries whether he, Cooper, would have stood up against the Government after twelve years. His elbow twitches, and he remembers how when he was beaten up by toughs as a little boy he cried and begged for mercy. He accuses himself continually of cowardice, and he is afraid of his superior officer, who is a conceited fool. Thus the victor, owner of incredible force, can no longer identify himself with his weapons. As Samuel Butler once prophesied in *Erewhon*, the machine now exists independently of man and without his real sanction.

Cooper's guilt is the guilt of the intellectual who has defeated force, but has done it only with superior force, by using the enemy's own weapons. Towards the end of the book there is a scene in which he meets a young Jewish boy on the train and hears about the violent revenge the inmates of concentration camps had taken on their guards at the liberation. The

young Jew's attitude is not anger, only a kind of sad acceptance, and Cooper at once identifies himself with him:

"It struck Cooper, with sudden clarity, that on the subject of violence he was absolutely as a Jew himself: defensive, on guard, outcast and self-outcast. . . . But that was not the whole of it. To say that there was a special Jewish attitude toward violence was to put the cart before the horse. It was the attitude of sensitive men the world over. . . ."

Throughout the book Cooper projects himself into the minds of the Germans he meets. He is the turncoat writer, the unhappy Jew, the shabby patriot. In the last pages a final switch is made: Cooper, by breaking army rules, becomes the victim of the machine in actuality. He goes off to trial and imprisonment: happy (and how well the author realizes this I am not sure) because he has broken his uneasy relationship with the conquering machine and become its victim: he can now make his final identification with the conquered:

This too had to be granted, that we were the creatures of the history into which we were born. Had the seventy million Germans been born in America, they would have lived out their lives drinking soda pop. . . . It was history which exposed or concealed our capacities . . . the history into which helplessly and accidentally we were born."

#### BOOK REVIEWERS IN THIS ISSUE

RAYMOND ROSENTHAL wrote "The Fate of Isaak Babel," which appeared in the February 1947 COMMENTARY. He has written for the *New Leader* and other publications.

GEORGE J. BECKER is assistant professor of English at Swarthmore College.

MILTON HIMMELFARB is a member of the overseas department of the American Jewish Committee.

THOMAS A. COWAN is professor of jurisprudence in the University of Nebraska College of Law.

JACOB SLOAN's translations of Yiddish and Hebrew poetry have often appeared in COMMENTARY. He is an editor on the staff of Schocken Books.

ALISON LURIE is on the editorial staff of Oxford University Press.

#### CURRENT BOOKS ON JEWISH SUBJECTS

AMERICAN JEWS IN WORLD WAR II: THE STORY OF 550,000 FIGHTERS FOR FREEDOM. By I. KAUFMAN. New York, Dial Press, 1947. 2 volumes. \$5.00.

With a roster compiled by the Bureau of War Records of the National Jewish Welfare Board.

THE AUTHORITY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT. By A. G. HEBERT. London, Faber, 1947. 326 pp. 15s.

DUTIES OF THE HEART. By BACHYA BEN JOSEPH IBN PAQUDA. Volume 5, translated from the Arabic into Hebrew by JEHUDA IBN TIBBON; with English translation by Rev.

- MOSES HYAMSON. New York, Bloch, 1947. 64 pp. \$3.50.  
*The Hebrew and English versions are on facing pages. Included are the ninth treatise, on abstinence, the tenth treatise, on the love of God, a list of the contents in poetic form, rebuke and petition.*
- EVEN THE NIGHT. By RAYMOND L. GOLDMAN. New York, Macmillan, 1947. 196 pp. \$2.50.  
*Autobiographical account of a struggle to overcome the handicaps of infantile paralysis, deafness, and diabetes. An expansion of The Good Fight, published in 1935.*
- FATHER AND THE ANGELS. By WILLIAM MANNERS. New York, Dutton, 1947. 224 pp. \$2.75.  
*Recollections of the author's boyhood in Zanesville, Ohio, where his father was a rabbi.*
- FIVE CHIMNEYS. By OLGA LENGYEL. Chicago, Ziff-Davis, 1947. 213 pp. \$3.00.  
*The story of the Auschwitz concentration camp.*
- A HISTORY OF THE JEWS: FROM THE BABYLONIAN EXILE TO THE END OF WORLD WAR II. By SOLOMON GRAYZEL. Philadelphia, Jewish Publication Society of America, 5707-1947. 835 pp. \$3.50.
- JEWISH COMMUNITY LIFE IN AMERICA. By BEN M. EIDIN. New York, Hebrew Publishing Co., 1947. 282 pp. \$2.50.  
*A study of the Jewish community from the local rather than the national aspect, intended for students, teachers, parents, and group leaders.*
- JUDAEAN ADDRESSES: SELECTED. Volume 5, 1933-1940. New York, International Press, 1947. 179 pp.  
*Partial contents: "Aryan and Semite," by M. J. Kohler; "The Present European Situation As It Affects the Jews," by Neville Laski; "Accusations Against the Jews—Past and Present," by Francis Hevesi; "Peace—Its Significance for World Jewry," by Philip Guedalla; "Bernard Shaw's Comedy 'Geneva' Considered From a Jewish Viewpoint," by Arthur K. Kuhn.*
- THE ORIGINS OF THE RUSSIAN JEWISH LABOUR MOVEMENT. By A. L. PATKIN. New York, Bloch, 1947. 275 pp. \$3.50.
- THE PHARISEES AND OTHER ESSAYS. By LEO S. BAECK. Translated from the German. New York, Schocken Books, 1947. 171 pp. \$3.00.  
*Selections from a noted German rabbi's two volumes of essays.*
- PHILO: FOUNDATIONS OF RELIGIOUS PHILOSOPHY IN JUDAISM, CHRISTIANITY, AND ISLAM. By HARRY AUSTRYN WOLFSON. Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1947. 2 volumes. \$10.
- 1933: A POEM SEQUENCE. By KARL WOLF-SKEHL. New York, Schocken Books, 1947. 123 pp. \$3.50.
- POLISH JEWS: A PICTORIAL RECORD. By ROMAN VISHNIAC. New York, Schocken Books, 1947. 16 pp., 31 plates. \$3.75.
- RADICALISM AND CONSERVATISM TOWARD CONVENTIONAL RELIGION: A PSYCHOLOGICAL STUDY BASED ON A GROUP OF JEWISH COLLEGE STUDENTS. By PHILIP MORTON KITAY. New York, Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1947. 125 pp. \$2.10. (Contributions to education, no. 919)
- THE RELIGIOUS PILGRIMAGE OF ISRAEL. By ISAAC GEORGE MATTHEWS. New York, Harper, 1947. 316 pp. \$4.00.  
*A history of the development of the Hebrew religion. The author is Professor Emeritus of Old Testament Literature and Exegesis, Crozer Theological Seminary.*
- REVELATION AND RESPONSE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT. By CUTHBERT A. SIMPSON. New York, Columbia University Press, 1947. 205 pp. \$2.50.  
*Originally delivered in 1946 as the Bishop Lectures at Union Theological Seminary, where the author is professor.*
- SENACA, U. S. A. By JOHN ROEBURT. New York, Curl, 1947. 255 pp. \$2.50.  
*The story of the birth and growth of a "hate racket" and of a Jewish family that is destroyed by it.*
- SEVENTH AVENUE STORY. By MARTIN ABZUG. New York, Dial, 1947. 315 pp. \$3.00.  
*Larry Furst fights for a toehold in the cloak and suit industry.*
- SOME DAYS WERE HAPPY. By LOUIS SOBOL. New York, Random House, 1947. 210 pp. \$2.75.  
*Recollections of a Broadway columnist's youth.*
- SOVIET JEWRY, PALESTINE AND THE WEST. By WALTER ZANDER. London, Gollancz, 1947. 109 pp. 6s.
- WHEN I WAS A BOY IN BOSTON. By CHARLES ANGOFF. Illustrations by SAMUEL GILBERT. New York, Beechurst Press, 1947. 182 pp. \$2.75.  
*Recollections of the author's boyhood in the Jewish community in the West End of Boston.*
- WHEN THE CANDLE WAS BURNING. By YEHUDA YAARI. Translated from the Hebrew by MENAHEM HURWITZ. London, Gollancz, 1947. 277 pp. 9s. 6d.